

THE STORY OF SHUTE

M. R. BRIDIE

THE BONVILLE FAMILY

NICHOLAS (I) DE BONVILL
was living in 1199

NICHOLAS (II) DE BONVILL = Amicia
Settled at Wiscombe before 1265
d. 4.8.1266

SIR WILLIAM BONVILLE = "Jone his wif",
Knighted 1250 d. 1273
1260

SIR NICHOLAS (III) BONVILLE = Hawyse
d. 1295 of Shute
1273

Sir Thomas Pyn

Alys = Umphraville

SIR NICHOLAS (IV) BONVILLE = Johanna
b. 1293

SIR WILLIAM BONVILLE = (1) Margaret d'Aumarle and Meriot
(2) Alice
(Builder of Manor House)

d. 1407

Ann, a nun

Alexander
(2nd son)

Hawyse de la Forde

Nicholas de la Forde

Katharine

John of Gaunt

Nicholas de la Forde

The Devon Poles

Katharine
d. 1396
John Bonville " of Shute " = Eliz. Fitz. Roger
of Chuton

LORD WILLIAM Bonville 1400
Inhabited 1400
John Bonville 1400
d. 1396
John of Gaunt
Liz. = Carew

WILLIAM BONVILLE = Eliz. only child of 5th
(Lord Harington)
b. 1416
d. 1460 in battle

R. Neville = Jane Beaufort
Earl of Salisbury

WILLIAM BONVILLE 1458
6th and last
Lord Harington
b. 1442
d. 1460 in battle

(i) Katherine Neville = Lord Wm. Hastings, K.G.
Beheaded 1483

WILLIAM BONVILLE = Katherine Neville
d. 1461 in battle

(ii) Sir John Grey = Eliz. Woodville 1464
d. 1461 in battle

Henry VII = Eliz. of York
m. 1486
Mary (Tudor) = Brandon

CICELY BONVILLE 1476 (i) Sir Thos. Grey, K.G.
The last of the Bonvilles = Marquis of Dorset
b. 1460
d. 1530

(ii) Henry Stafford,
E. of Wiltshire

Sir John Grey = Eliz. Woodville 1464
d. 1461 in battle

(ii) Sir Thos. Grey, 2nd Marquis of Dorset + 6 sons and
b. 1477 1530 8 daughters

Frances = Sir Henry Grey, 3rd Marquis of Dorset
Executed 1554

Sir Thos. Grey, 2nd Marquis of Dorset + 6 sons and
b. 1477 1530 8 daughters

LADY JANE GREY
b. 1537
Beheaded 1554
Katherine
Mary

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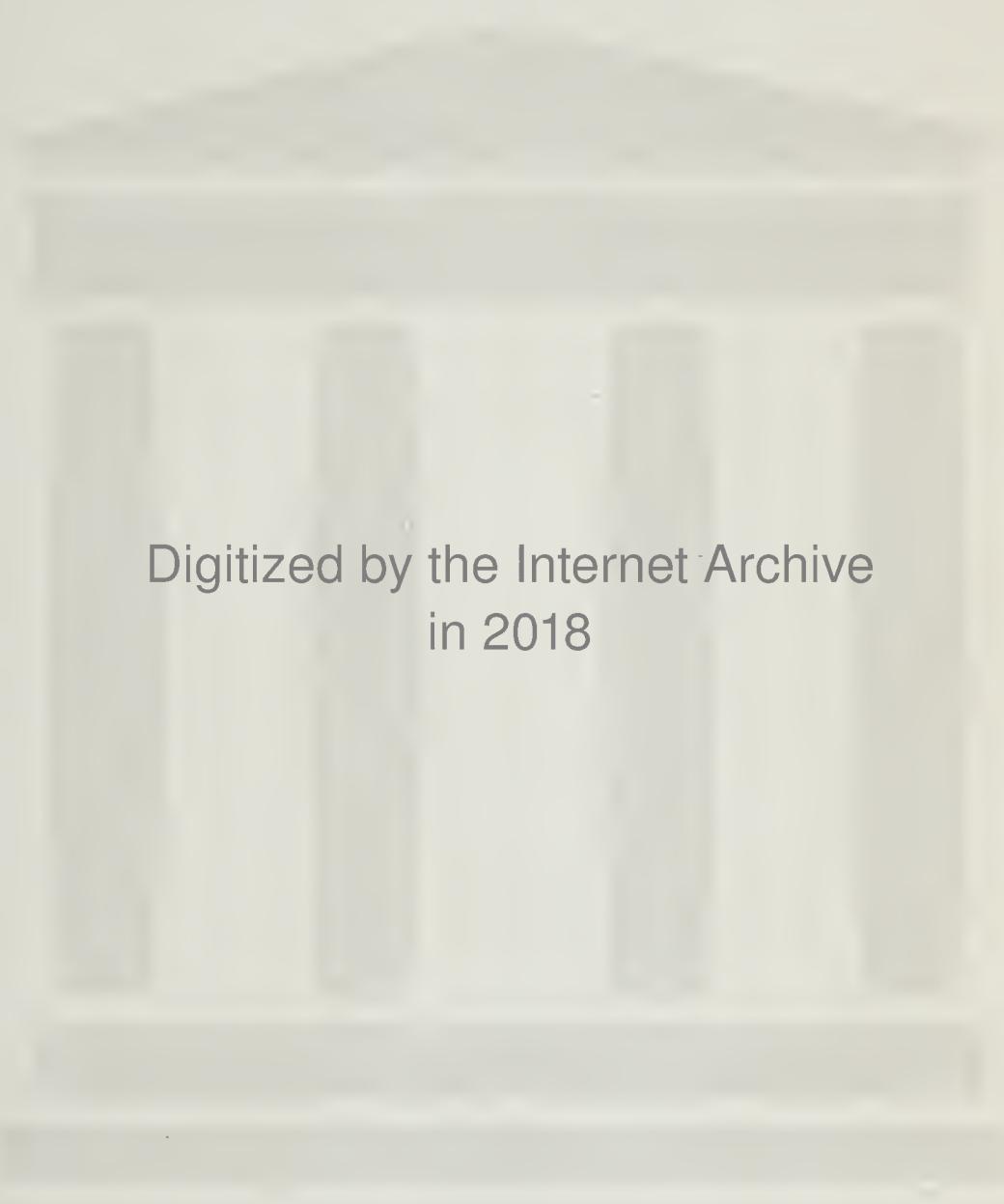
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Round the World without a Pinprick.

Across Canada with Two Cameras.

Peace Treaty Celebrations in the Tongan Isles. (Monograph.)



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[Photograph by "The Times"]
LADY ANNE DE LA POLE
BY ROMNEY

THE
STORY OF SHUTE
THE BONVILLES AND POLES

BY
M. F. BRIDIE

With a Foreword by
SIR JOHN CAREW POLE, Br., D.S.O.

Published by
Shute School, Ltd., Axminster,
1955

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

B. Smith - \$5.00

DEDICATED

to all who

In the past have loved,
In the present do love, and
In the future will love

SHUTE.

120315?

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FOREWORD

ANTONY HOUSE,
TORPOINT,
CORNWALL.

It is very pleasing to me to have been asked to write a foreword for Dr. Bridie's book. Her pride and affection for my old family home at Shute is so obvious, as indeed it is for my ancestors who lived there. She has gone to great trouble to tell the story not only of the Poles, who are still associated with Shute at the present time, but of the Bonvilles who lived there for nearly as long a period, and who were the principal builders of the Old House. Actually, the Poles of Shute inherited through a direct line of descent from the Bonvilles, so that the house has virtually been inhabited by the same family, for no less than six hundred years.

I am most anxious that Old Shute House shall be preserved for many years to come, and with this aim in view, I am at the present time in negotiation with the National Trust, in the hope that this historic house, of which the Plantagenet wing only is left, may be added to those already entrusted to the safe-keeping of the Nation.

JOHN G. CAREW POLE.

17th February, 1955.

PREFACE

ON entering Shute Park by the Tudor Gateway, the attention of visitors is at once arrested by the sight of these mysterious old buildings ; their melancholy charm attracts the least romantic both as regards their history and that of those whose lives have passed there.

When I first came to Shute I, too, was captivated by their subtle fascination, and soon began to enquire into the distant past. During the twenty years in which I have had the good fortune to live under the shadow of the grey walls, I have endeavoured to unravel the tangled pattern which had grown up round the ancient families, and to correlate the disconnected fragments. It has been an alluring ploy, albeit often a baffling one, for few notable families have left fewer records behind them.

The Bonvilles and Poles, between them have owned the Shute estates, with only one short break, for nearly six hundred years, and they continue to do so.

Briefly : the earliest existing MANOR HOUSE was built by Sir William Bonville during the reign of Richard II.

About one hundred years later his descendant, Cicely Bonville, by ingenious alterations and skilful additions, transformed the Manor House into the great new TUDOR MANSION. When the last Bonvilles and their direct descendants, Lady Jane Grey and her father died so tragically, all the property escheated to the crown.

The Pole family came to Shute in 1560 and occupied the Tudor Mansion till 1789. The fifth Baronet then

demolished a portion of it, and built the new SHUTE HOUSE half a mile farther up the Park. The last of the family died in 1926, when the property came to a younger branch, and to Sir John Carew Pole, the present owner.

For the last twenty-two years the house has been let on lease.

I have long felt the need for an authenticated record, which would be readily available to the many visitors who have enquired about the ancient buildings. The idea of writing this myself has been germinating recently, since I have had the leisure to give to the more intensive reading, researches, and visits to places which would throw light on the architecture. I had always hoped that a worthier pen than mine would have been attracted to the task, but so far none has been forthcoming. It is perhaps unseemly for one without historical training to undertake such a complicated piece of work, but I must claim as my chief qualification, my deep affection for the place ; I know that no one could have brought to it keener interest or greater devotion.

The references to which I have turned are given later, and are generally acknowledged in the text, but much historical evidence has been found in widely scattered fields, in quaintly-written deeds, faded leases, and in a few almost undecipherable letters. Naturally the most fruitful sources have been found at Antony House, Torpoint ; there Sir John Carew Pole has kindly allowed me the run of his Muniment Room, where a vast treasury of deeds and old family papers are being catalogued and carefully preserved. I must tender to him my sincere thanks. I should like also to record my appreciation of the help which I received from Miss Groombridge, the County Archivist, for some useful sign-posts, and in the elucidation of some of the hieroglyphics.

In the early days I used to enjoy the visits of the late Lady Beatrice Pole-Carew, and the late Miss Blanche de la Pole, for the intimate details which they were able to give me.

It is fortunate that this work is now finished for the moment is propitious, since Shute is now arousing considerable public interest. All friends are truly gratified to learn that these historic buildings are now being given a new lease of life by the National Trust. Moreover, "new" Shute House, more than 160 years old, has also been recently scheduled as a building of Architectural and Historic Interest.

MARION FERGUSON BRIDIE.

KILMINGTON,

March, 1955.

THE STORY OF SHUTE

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY DWELLERS AT SHUTE

East Devon, a pleasant land of wooded hills interspersed with patches of farmland like variegated chequers, shows up its bright red earth among the green of the pasture. An equable climate, fertile valleys watered by many streams, and grassy slopes, make the region peculiarly attractive. Thus it is now ; thus it must have been in those far-off days of the early Middle Ages when peasants in the picturesque little hamlets worked on the farms of the big estates, and wrested a living from their own small strips of soil. Apart from certain discomforts and some inconveniences to which, knowing nothing better, they were well accustomed, it was a healthy life, and above all peaceful. There were probably the usual disagreements and discontents, local squabbles and partisan quarrels in which the farmers took sides with the lords of the manor ; yet although such quarrels were deemed vastly important to each at that time, they were soon forgotten. In the larger issues however, the region was not troubled ; far from the centres of population and far from the routes of marching armies, the horrors of battle touched Devon and the quiet backwater of Shute less than they affected most of the counties of England.

Shute lies about four miles from the sea at Seaton, the ancient Moridinum, and two miles to the north of Colyton ; the old track from the south can easily be traced along the valley of the Umborne, avoiding

the hill over which the new road now runs. Shute was a less important place than the neighbouring Colyton, which was part of a royal demesne and one of the seats of the famous Courtenay family, later the Earls of Devon, whose forebear built a mansion at Colcombe. Stern rivalry existed between the lords of Shute and Colyton, and in spite of inter-marriages between several members, relations were not amicable.

The earliest mention of Shute appears in an ecclesiastical deed of Henry Marshall, Bishop of Exeter, and is quoted by Oliver in his *Ecclesiastical Antiquities*:

“Carta Henrice, Epi de Ecclesia de Colinton et de Capella de Schieta.”

Much later, Richard de Colyton was required to provide a chaplain to serve in the “Capella de Shete.” The incumbency was later in the gift of Cicely Bonville and for many generations in that of the Pole family.

The little Shute Church was probably a Chapel of Ease to Colyton. Some authorities have suggested that it was part of the Manor, for some details in the surviving structure are of identically the same early Perpendicular period as the Old Manor House of Shute. It does not appear that the Bonvilles took any special interest in the Church almost on their doorstep. Although Sir William, the Builder of the Old House, left gifts and legacies embracing almost every person and building he knew, even including the poor tenants and curate of Shute, he made no mention of the little Church.

In this attractive corner of the world, therefore, it is easy to believe that, “Schute hath been a very ancient dwelling of personages of good worth,” among whom could be regarded the ancient families of des Schetes, Bonville and Pyn.

DES SCHETES.

The name of the manor is variously written in ancient documents as "Shieta," "Schute," and "Shete." The earliest recorded dwellers here were Sir William and his brother Sir Lucas, and William's son Robert, who took their surnames in traditional fashion from their dwelling-place at Schete and were known as "des Schetes." The meaning of the word is variously interpreted but is probably connected with parklands on a hill, for there is a reference in the Disafforestation Charter which concerned this part of the county.

Apparently some, at any rate, of their lands were leased, for *The Hundred of Colyton in Early Times*, an ancient document (with a modern sound) is quoted as saying that Lucas de Schete had his rent raised in 1228.

Some of the Schetes still lived here during the reign of Henry III but when the Bonvilles settled in the Colyton district they soon became the most important family, till the arrival of the Courtenays.

THE BONVILLES.

The first Bonvilles seem to have come to this country in the twelfth century, from Normandy or, as the name implies, from Bonvil in the ancient province of Beauce. The first Nicholas de Bonvil of whom there is any definite record had settled in Devonshire as early as the first year of King John (1199).

The second Nicholas came to Wiscombe, a fine estate in the Hundred of Colyton, which was granted to him "about ye middest of the raigne of Henry III." Here he "made it his dwellinge." Sir Nicholas II de Bonvill married a certain Amicia, who, as her "dourie" brought a large part of the Northlew

estates near Okehampton. He already possessed estates in and around Ilchester in Somerset. There were two large Churches there, and the famous Whitehall Nunnery. The "de Bolenville" family was specially interested in the House, and a later Head of the family, Sir Nicholas IV de Bonvill, was Patron in 1324. A story is recorded that in the middle of the fourteenth century a certain Nicholas de Bonville was haled before the Sheriff for intruding with mischievous intent into the Nunnery at a period when the Lady Abbess was not a strong disciplinarian. The troublesome youth may have been a son of the Patron; the names and situation seem to make this probable. If so, he was a younger brother of the Sir William who afterwards built Shute.

Nicholas (II) died at his manor at Wiscombe, August 4th, 1266, and was buried before the High Altar in the magnificent Cistercian Abbey, near Axminster, which was in course of erection. He had taken a keen and practical interest in this foundation, and it is not improbable that the dowry brought to him by Amicia may have helped to swell his contributions and his legacies.

The Abbey was founded by two brothers, Sir Reginald de Mohun, Earl of Somerset and Sir William de Mohun. By his marriage with Alice, sister of Lord Briwere, Sir Reginald acquired the Manor of Axminster, anciently held by the kings of England. This whole property, approximately 400 acres, he handed over as the site for the Abbey. The exact position was chosen with the utmost deliberation, about one mile to the south of the town, near the banks of the River Axe, thus ensuring a plentiful water supply and providing for "To-morrow will be Friday." Contributions poured in for the building; Bronescombe, Bishop of Exeter, gave £400, a munificent gift in those

days. All the stone for the building came free from the quarries at Churchstaunton near Chard. The Abbey was colonized from Beaulieu Abbey in Hampshire ; the first monks arrived on the Feast of Epiphany 1247 and "entered the site of their future habitation in solemn procession, singing." The next year Pope Innocent IV took the monastery under his special protection and called it "de nono Manso," hence the name Niewham or Newenham. Naturally the building of this truly superb edifice aroused vivid interest in the whole countryside. Parts were in use, however, within a few years of the founding, for as noted earlier, Sir Nicholas (II) de Bonvill, was buried there shortly after Sir William de Mohun, the Founder. Sir Nicholas bequeathed Tuddesheyes, one of his properties in Kilmington, to the Foundation, while during his lifetime he had granted rents to the value of twenty-five shillings and four pence annually to be paid by the tenants of some of his farms in Dalwood and Kilmington. The old knight apparently did not live much at Shute during the last few years of his life, nor did he see the completion of this great Ab'ey. But there he lay in peace with his family around him.

A few years later, the site of the Abbey and a considerable portion of the lands were leased to the third Marquis of Dorset, grandson of Cicely Bonville. Then, alas, under the Edict for the Suppression of the Larger Monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII, the Abbey was surrendered to the King's Commissioners in 1539, but the buildings were ravaged and despoiled, and in the final tragedy not one stone was left upon another. Many fragments of the edifice again utilized in buildings of lesser worth are still to be seen in the neighbourhood. All other traces of the wonderful structure have long since disappeared, but in its time, for nearly 300 years, the

Abbey played a vital part in the history of Axminster and the Bonvilles.

THE FIRST SIR WILLIAM BONVILLE.

This Sir William was the son of Sir Nicholas de Bonvill (II) and Amicia, and was found to be "of full age" in 1264.

It is recorded in Vivian's *Visitations of Devon* that William, son of Nicholas, was knighted in 1250 by Henry III, and that a few years later, he made his customary homage and service to his father on February 6th, 1265, thereby recovering certain lands in Somerset which the family held for many generations. At that time he was living at Wiscombe "on the west part, over a hill beyond Seton." The Wiscombe property belonged to a Norman foundation, the "Abbey of St. Michael de periculo Maris in Normandy" and was connected with the Priory of Otterton, but de Bonvill leased Wiscombe for a term or years at an annual rental of twenty shillings. Presumably he built a home there, for it is mentioned as a "fine manner place," lying about five miles south-east of Shute, with the great deer park "which he had made." Although Sir Nicholas (II) was the first of the family to live at Wiscombe, he had evidently interests in the parish of Shute and in a wide circle around.

Sir William Pole, the Antiquary, one of the most important figures in our story, wrote in his *Collections towards a Description of Devonshire* :

"In this place (Shute) the famylye of Bonvill made their principall dwellinge which had (long before this Nicholas had the mansion howse and mannor of Shute) divers lands within Shute."

SIR NICHOLAS BONVILLE (III) OF SHUTE, grandson of Nicholas (II) and Amicia, married Hawyse, co-heiress of Sir Thomas Pyn. It is noteworthy that this Sir Nicholas is the first of his race to be described as "of Shute."

The family, then of some distinction and considerable possessions, must surely have had an abode appropriate to its station during the century before the Bonville Manor House was erected.

As her dowry Hawyse Pyn received from her father a large part of Shute estates and, by virtue of her inheritance, Sir Nicholas (III) and his family transported themselves and their possessions over to Shute during the life-time of his father-in-law Sir Thomas Pyn, and thereafter made that house their principal residence.

SIR NICHOLAS BONVILLE (IV) OF SHUTE.

Born in 1293.

The family had barely settled at Shute when both Sir Nicholas (III) and his wife died in the same year. They left two tiny children, Nicholas (IV), the heir, about two years of age, and John. It was not a promising beginning to the family story, but this Nicholas (IV) and his wife Johanna had several children, of whom Anne became a nun at Wherwell, near Andover, and Sir William, the heir, was the Builder of Shute Manor House and a celebrated member of his family. The second son, Alexander, was an ancestor of the Poles of Shute.

SIR THOMAS PYN OF COMBE PYNE.

Some account must now be given of Sir Thomas Pyn of Combe Pyne whose progeny are interwoven with the later Bonvilles.

His wife Alice (whose mother had married Sir

Robert de Schete) was grand-daughter of a wealthy landowner in the district.

Sir Thomas Pyn of Combe Pyne belonged to an ancient family which had flourished there since the days of Richard I. His name is given in a list of Sheriffs of Exeter in 1273, as "Thomas del Pyn, de Pin or de Pyne," so later writers may make their choice.

In his *Worthies of Devon*, John Prince "supposes" that Sir Adrian du Pin, one of the Knights of the Round Table, may have been an ancestor of these Pyns ; it is a titillating theme upon which to muse. However that may be, it is certain that Sir Thomas was an important landowner in this corner of Devon, on the hills to the east of the Axe Valley. Combe Pyne, even now merely a tiny village lies in a fold of the hills which opens towards the north-east, but his properties extended in many directions. One can readily imagine Sir Thomas proudly surveying his possessions ; he would ride up the steep village street past the quaint little church, with its unusual gable-roofed tower which his forebears had probably helped to build. At the head of the valley he would join the old Roman road "Regiam Viam," which runs from Dorchester down to the ford at Colyford, and away to Exeter ; he might follow the ridge of the hill towards the north-east, then rein in his steed as the immense panorama of open country stretched away before him in all its serene beauty. The nearby Bay of Moridinum and the English Channel would not be visible, being just behind the brow of the hill. He could contemplate the landscape spreading out in all directions in like manner as long ago Moses may have viewed from Mount Pisgah, the Promised Land. This was indeed the Promised Land to Sir Thomas. Looking across the rich and fertile valley he could

see the Hundred of Colyton and the magnificent mansion perhaps at that very time being built by Hugh de Courtenay, the first of the line to reside at Colyton. He could discern the Stockland Hills where the straight Roman Road ran for more than five miles, the hills above Honiton where the ancient Saxon King Honi defended his last ditch, and the distant woods of Ottery long afterwards beloved by his descendant, Cicely Bonville, and further west again where the misty outline of the high ground of Central Devon closed the view.

Often and often must Sir Thomas have passed that way and scanned the distant Shute Hill, the alluring site which he ardently desired for his new family seat.

At any rate in due course sometime during the middle years of the reign of Edward I, he achieved his desire, and did indeed purchase from the des Schetes a large property in the parish of Shute and thereafter made his home there. It is not clear how long Sir Thomas dwelt there but he appears to have handed it over to his daughter Hawyse on her marriage to Nicholas (III) Bonville somewhere about the year 1292, a few years before his own death.

Alys, sister and co-heiress with Hawyse, married Sir Walter Umphraville of Down-Umphraville, whose lands almost adjoined the Pyn estates; at a later date these also were inherited by the descendants of Hawyse. On the death of Sir Thomas, the Pyn family came to an end.

SIR WILLIAM BONVILLE, Kt. OF SHUTE (*The Builder*).

The date of his birth has not been ascertained, but his father being born in 1293, it can be fairly assumed that Sir William had lived to a ripe old age when he died 114 years later in 1407. As three of his sons died

before him, it seems as if he were more than a middle-aged man, perhaps indeed patriarchal. His grandson, another William, was born 1392.

He married (1) Margaret, daughter of Sir d'Aumarle, heiress of Geo. de Meriet of Merriott, Somerset.

(2) Alice, born 1352, married soon after December, 1400. She died the Thursday before Easter, 1426.

This Sir William is of paramount importance in our story, as the Builder of the original Bonville Manor House. In the time of King Edward III, he is said to have "enlarged his estate and became very great, as well by his own procuring as by the augmentation of his wife's estate, . . . and made his principal dwelling in this place." He was the first prominent representative of a family which was gradually becoming more prosperous, even challenging the Courtenays who, up till that time, had been without rivals in East Devon.

By his first wife, Margaret, he had four sons, John, Richard, William, and Thomas, and two daughters, Katherine and Elizabeth.

He married secondly, early in the century, Alice, a lady who had already buried four husbands, and who was to outlive the Builder by eighteen years. Alice must have been a capable woman for, in an age when few women were considered competent to deal with business matters, she was appointed one of the executors of the will of her first husband, Sir John Rodney, Kt. She was also relict of Ralph Carmenow, and was able "by cession of laws" . . . "at his death to secure an annuity of £100 per annum to Sir William Bonville." She afterwards rounded off the transaction by marrying him. Later, in 1422, she executed an Indenture with Nicholas, Abbot of Newenham, to which (Lord) William Bonville and his youngest brother Thomas were witnesses. Evidence shows

that this Alice was quite capable of managing the affairs of her young relatives as well as her own.

She had previously married as one of her husbands John Fitz-Roger, Lord of the Manor of Chewton Mendip, by whom she had Elizabeth, heiress to the Fitz-Rogers ; this young lady (doubtless with something more than the mere consent of her mother), married John Bonville, stepson of the latter.

The complications produced by early marriages, short widowhoods, frequent re-marriages and inter-marriages make a perfect nightmare of the tracing of genealogies of the Middle Ages.

Sir William was certainly a man of parts, shrewd, kindly and pious, as is clearly shown by the dispositions made in his will. He travelled extensively in neighbouring counties in the discharge of his duties, first as Sheriff of Somerset and Dorset, and later of Devon. He had many interests in Church and State. For nearly thirty years he was closely connected with Exeter, where, having a house of his own, he spent much time ; he knew the needs of the people, his neighbours, and the poor of the city, but it is evident that he was familiar with the conditions, even of the roads in many other districts. Although no mention is made of his military service, he is described in a deed of Bishop Stafford of Exeter as "miles" and elsewhere as "chevalier."

In those later days of the fourteenth century, in spite of labour troubles caused by shortage of workmen, following the ravages of the Black Death, and the constant drain of foreign campaigns, steady improvements, brought about quite gradually by legislation, were taking place all over the country, so Sir William's duties as Sheriff and as Lord of the Manor of Shute would have been full of interest. Exeter, only twenty-five miles distant, could easily be reached on

horseback, so that he could readily travel backwards and forwards to supervise the works he was projecting. He was essentially a practical man, yet as he rode along and turned off the main road surely would he approach his new home with pleasurable feelings of anticipation.

His Manor House was probably designed and completed during the early years of the reign of King Richard II, certainly after 1375 but before 1407, the date 1380 being assigned to it by various authorities. It is not possible to say how long the building was in course of erection; but a fuller description is given in a later chapter.

In addition to the building of the Manor House and the care of his estates, and property in Exeter, Sir William continued to hold the ancient heritage of Wiscombe and Southleigh and to administer it personally. The story told later about the birth of his grandson shows that he supervised his properties intimately.

The Builder died at the end of 1407, and at his own request was buried in the Abbey of Newenham, almost within sight of his new home.

The Builder appears to have been very much aware of his possessions, to have had a passion for disposing of them, or to have felt uncertain of his span of life, for three of his wills survive, one made in 1366, one in 1375, and the last and most frequently quoted in 1407.

From the point of view of this story the first is particularly significant, dated :

“ Le damaigne proschein apres la feste de tous
saincts le an du reigne le Roy Edward III pus
la conqueste de Engleterre quarante.”

At that time, forty years before his death, he had only

one son, John, and two daughters. With regard to the girls he expects that both Elizabeth and Katherine shall each be claimed in marriage by a man having "centz marc^z de terre," not a lordly estate, but if he has any more daughters it would be sufficient if their husbands should have forty marc^z only. John, his heir, was probably very young and unmarried (his first grandson was not born till more than twenty-six years later). If John had no children, the manor of Shute should go to Margaret, the Builder's wife, for the term of her life. But, and this is an important proviso, after her death *the house should be sold to make provision for the poor*. This is particularly noteworthy as helping to confirm the date of the new building. If his new Manor House had just been built at that time, it is extremely unlikely that he would have suggested selling it, even at his death. In the 1375 will, the Manor House is not mentioned, so was probably not yet in existence.

It is fortunate that the last will of this good man has come down to us intact, written in quaint Norman French then the popular, but dying, language in polite society and for formal documents. It is printed, together with other local contemporary wills from the transcription by Edmund Stafford who was Bishop of Exeter at one time; an index and some copies were published in 1886 by the Rev. Hingeston-Randolph during the reign of Queen Victoria. It is a fascinating collection, but in reading through a number of these documents their similarity is striking. Among them all, however, few are more human and more attractive than that of the Builder. It is strange how the innermost thoughts of this generous old gentleman can be laid bare after nearly 600 years, every word of the quaint testament ringing true. It is a valuable document which not only throws light

on the period, but, complicated though it is to decipher, stimulates interest in the language of the time. He was wise, thoughtful for others, careful for his own possessions, especially (as was of course to be expected) his new mansion at Shute. First, he indicated the bequests to his second wife Alice. He says "Ieo devise a dite compaigne." The term "compaigne" was not unusual at the time; it appears on a receipt dated Colcombe 1355 for £15 6s. 8d. paid by John de Cobham for the sojourn and other necessaries for "Margarete de Cobhaum, nostre fylle, sa compaigne." Alice was to have for life his house in Exeter, where he had spent so many years, 100 marks in money, and half of all his silver vessels, as well as all the books, vestments and other apparel belonging to his chapel. He also bequeathed to Alice all kinds of necessaries for the upkeep of his hall, chamber, pantry, buttery, kitchen and fishpond within his manor of Shute, and all other chattels in his manors of Wiscombe, etc. The language is so attractive and interesting, that short excerpts are given below.

The document begins :

"Ieo, William Boneville, chiualer (chevalier)"
 . . . "Samadie proschein deuant le feste de
 lassumpcoun de nostre Dame . . ."

He continues :

"Ieo deuise malme (mon âme) a Dieux et a sa
 douce mere, moun corps destre enterre deuant
 le haut croys de lesglise de Nywenham . . ."

Further on :

"Ensement ieo deuise a mesme lesglise de
 Nywenham pour gysaunce de moy et de mes
 compaignes illeoques et pour prier pour nos
 almes XL li de money."

“Ensement ieo deuise a sink centz pourez hommez et femmes pour leur vesture et chausure pour prier pour malme, 100 marcs.”

He was a wealthy man and it is interesting to note how faithfully and generously he provided for various poor tenants and retainers, and in fact for a vast number of other people. He left money too for masses and other needs to churches in his demesnes in Devon and Somerset. After he had bequeathed all his vestments and other apparel to his wife, he says “forpris (except) un missall le pluys petit quelle ieo deuise a lesglise de Socke Denys.” It would be interesting to know why this special little missall was singled out. No trace can now be found of this little church near his home at Ilchester. He left also a small legacy to the tenants at Lymington in Somerset, a parish to which two centuries later his descendant appointed Thomas Wolsey as Rector.

Perhaps his most generous and important bequest was a sum of 300 marks for the endowment of a hospital for twelve poor men and women, or as he writes : “un maison Dieu a excestre en Combestrete pour 12 pourez hommes et femmes.” He also left property in Combe Row, and all his rents in Exon. (except his own mansion house) to endow them. At the death of his ultimate descendant, the ill-fated Henry Grey, Marquis of Dorset, all the property was forfeited to the Crown and later “lost.” In one of the subsequent references to these Almshouses in the notes of the Historical MS Commission, it is stated that Queen Elizabeth granted to the Mayor of Exeter, the right of nomination of twelve poor persons to Bonville’s Almshouses. The old property was evidently still in existence as a separate foundation at that time, but long since then the almshouses were engrafted upon Lunt’s Charity in that City. The

present well-built Homes bear a tablet with the inscription :

Benefaction of
RICHARD LUNT
1675

Supplementing original benefaction of
SIR WILLIAM BONVILLE
1408

The careful squire, knowing how quickly property, and particularly roads and bridges get into disrepair, left 100 marks for the upkeep of "les pontez et voyes que sont febles et perfondes, deinx mes Seigneuries en les countez de Devens et Somerset."

Realizing perhaps the rigours of a convent life, the affectionate brother left to "Anneys Bonevylle, ma soere, nonaigne de Wherewell, 100 marks, un hanapp (wine-cup) avec un couvercle dargent et ma meilleur hoppelond (big coat) avec le furrure."

To "William moun fitz 200 marcs de money en aide de lui marier." It has not transpired why so large a sum was needed for this purpose. William left no child though it is known that he did live till manhood and acted as one of the witnesses of the will of Alice his stepmother. There is no further history of him. To the daughters then married, Dame Elizabeth Carew and Dame Katherine Cobham, Sir William left £20 each. As a matter of history it may be recorded that they had each found a husband eligible as regards territory to satisfy their father's early conditions. Apparently they had no more sisters.

Other legacies included 100 shillings to Ilchester, "Glastingbiri," etc.: to the "vicary de Colytown" 100 shillings, and the same for the "pour tenauntz" in Axminster. He left also X marcs for the poor tenants of Shute. Among this large number of

beneficiaries, he left also 10 marks for one Priest at Shute. In the Inq. p.m. dated 9 Hen. IV it states that he died possessed of vast estates in Cornwall, in Wiltshire (including West Kington) and about thirty-five properties in Devonshire, and many estates in Somerset including Meriet. He and his second wife, Alice, were buried among his ancestors, before the High Altar of Newenham Abbey.

Kindly and yet with due consideration, Sir William, the Builder, distributed largesse all around. When he left the legacy of 40 marks to the Abbey of Newenham, he could not know that, though the splendid edifice became a ruin less than two centuries later, yet the house that he built would stand as a memorial to him after 600 years.

CHAPTER II

BONVILLE MANOR HOUSE Built about 1380

The Bonville family, as recorded earlier, dwelt at Shute for more than a century before the Manor House was begun, though we know that there had been a home there at any rate for more than forty years, and probably much longer; the Builder had also the house in Exeter for thirty years before his death.

Although it has been suggested that Shute was not actually the chief manor, we can use the term with confidence, for the house is frequently mentioned as the "manner house," both by the Builder himself, Leland, and other early writers. Of recent years, it has sometimes been called Shute Barton.

When Sir William chose to build his "Manner House," his special pride, at Shute, we may presume that this was a favoured locality. Although perhaps the beauty of the landscape, where all around looked green and serene, may not have been a consideration, the woods on Shute Hill and the grounds behind stretching away to Kilmington must have been attractive then, as now.

Certainly the position, high on the side of a hill, overlooking wide valleys, was in many ways a convenient one for the residence of an important family, and wisely situated for defence in those lawless middle ages.

It is possible too that the Builder's choice may have been governed finally by the proximity of the little Shute Church, a Chapelry of Colyton, situated just behind.



WEST FRONT OF BONVILLE MANOR HOUSE showing later accretions. The original front door, Gothic windows and staircase turret can be seen. When the Tudor Mansion was built on to the north wall (on the left) a slice had to be cut off the turret ; the rest of it remains neatly tucked into the angle between the two buildings. The Oratory has been erected to the right, with the quatrefoil opening which adorns many of Cicely Bonville's works. The brick chimney and fireplace, and the cinquefoil headed windows in it were probably added in the late sixteenth century, perhaps by the Antiquary. The curious steps and the depressed arch were evidently necessitated by the building of the Oratory. For the de la Pole shield above the putlog holes, refer to page 100.

Another, perhaps more practical, advantage of the position lay in the never-failing supply of good pure water from a well, which supplies the tiny village to this day.

Again, the site was eminently suitable ; it was on the main communication route between Colyford, an early English borough, and the Roman Road over Stockland Hill, which Bonville would often have followed in travelling in the county and to his properties in Somerset. The Roman Road crossed another route which came up from Axminster, over Bow Bridge and Shute Hill to a point where the outer pillars of the Shute estate still stand, thence to Honiton and Exeter. This particular junction was therefore an attractive one.

The deer park, within a half mile of the village and Shute Hill, would be an added attraction for hunting, in the days when sports were few. At the present time, the Park extends to a mere 120 acres, but is reputed to have been formerly a Royal Deer Park of vast extent dating back from an early period in the Norman dynasty. As a Royal Deer Park it would be held under special conditions. It used to be considered that one of the stipulations was that at least forty head of deer should always be preserved, presumably to be ready in case the King wished to do any deer stalking. However, although they look mild and timid, deer are wild and greedy creatures and terribly destructive of gates and fences ; so much so that the park-keepers would need to be constantly mending pallisades, to prevent the animals escaping and making for the woods on the hill. During the recent War, labour being short, the present landowner sought to give up keeping the animals. After intensive enquiries, and searches into old deeds, he was unable to find any regulation about the necessity

for retaining the deer. Now the great Park is the home of foals and the haunt of wild flower seekers. Enormous trees, knotted and gnarled, survivors or descendants, rear their aged heads proudly on the slopes of the hills. Tradition says that in ancient days a "Druid's circle," scene of pagan rites, stood on the summit of the central hill. There is no trace of stones, but the few remaining oaks, in the form of a rough circle, may have grown from an ancient oak grove.

This central flat open space at a later day must have been the scene of many a gay and colourful archery or hawking meeting or pig-sticking chase. One can easily visualize the archers cantering along the greensward to the gate and up the hill, ready to begin their sport. It is alluring to rumin ate on the recorded fact that King Henry VII lost £1 to the Marquis of Dorset, Cicely Bonville's husband, "at the butts."

One of the ancient trees is marked on early maps as "King John's Oak." Tradition has it that the acorn was planted by the King when hunting. He had been created Earl of Cornwall at an early age, and the manor of Axminster had been held by him till 1204. So it is just conceivable that he may have passed this way on some unrecorded journey, before the days of modern publicity, and tarried awhile for a day's sport.

Be that as it may, in the Shute grounds too, several very ancient oaks rear their majestic heads ; they have been well planted and wisely spaced so that their growth has been unrestricted. Dare we assume that, when he built the mansion, William Bonville thought also of beautifying his surrounding desmenes ? To see the many fine old trees in the ancestral grounds, we certainly can.

At first sight, the whole building inside and out appears to be a complex medley of architectural styles

and periods; historical evidence is meagre, and pertinent documents almost non-existent. However, by sedulous consideration of the human factors, patient investigation of every minute detail of the buildings, and comparison with houses of similar periods, it has been possible to unravel a good deal of the apparently hopeless tangle. The quest has been rewarding, and the sequence of various sections of the building can actually be distinguished with reasonable assurance.

The general parts of the house and the additions and alterations can be said to fall roughly into the following divisions, sometimes merging, sometimes overlapping :

First Period. Sir William Bonville, the Builder's, original Manor House, 1380, facing almost due west with hexagonal turret containing newel staircase.

Second Period. Cicely Bonville, Marchioness of Dorset, and her husband, Thomas Grey, Marquis of Dorset. Last half of fifteenth century :

- (a) Oratory and south gateway.
- (b) Main part of Tudor Mansion towards north and west, between 1476 and 1490.
- (c) Square turret on east, between 1490 and 1501.

Third Period.

- (a) Mr. William Pole, between 1561-1587. The Gatehouse.
- (b) Sir William Pole, the Antiquary, between 1587-1600. Extension of north wing towards the west with octagonal tower (or towers).
- (c) Sir John Pole, Bt., middle of seventeenth century. Interior work, such as Jacobean panelling, sash windows in east tower.

Fourth Period. Sir John William de la Pole. The greater part of the Tudor Mansion demolished, 1785. New Shute House built 1787-1789.

Fifth Period. Sir William Templer de la Pole. Internal alterations, introduction of mezzanine floor 1840.

In this chapter we shall deal only with Sir William Bonville's original Manor House.

Although the earliest Bonvilles did live in Shute, for more than a century, no trace of their ancestral home has been unearthed in the neighbourhood; this can, of course, be explained by the fact that houses of epochs prior to the fourteenth century were simpler and less durable. For instance, the house mentioned by Sir William in his will in 1366 was of such an impermanent nature that he casually suggested that it might be sold when his widow no longer required it.

A story current in the village records that some sixty to eighty years ago, workmen investigating some underground trouble came upon a "very ancient gateway" below the level of the Hall. Again (rumour avers) that a so-called subterranean passage, blocked up many years since, which was said to connect Colcombe Castle and Shute Manor, had its northern exit in the cellars at a level much below that of the courtyard. Considering the discordant relations which had nearly always existed between the Courtenays and Poles, the idea of a connecting passage between them is whimsical.

It is most unlikely that the Manor House was in fact erected on an earlier foundation, for it seems improbable that any part of an earlier building would be suitable as foundation for these stout walls. Of course some flint on the spot might conveniently have been used, in the same way as some of the stones from the demolished Tudor Mansion were used at a later date for the massive foundations of the new Shute House.

EXTERIOR.

Only a small, somewhat circumscribed, courtyard survives, closely surrounded by various buildings ; no gate large enough to admit a cart of any kind has been left. The fine early Gothic doorway of the original front is still in excellent state of preservation.

The original Manor House was in some degree small (46-ft. x 36-ft. outside measurements) and plain, compared with many mansions of great extent and magnificence of the fourteenth century, but at that period the Bonvilles, although rich in lands, were not nearly so wealthy as they became later, when elaborate additions were made. Doubtless it was as large as was considered necessary for the family, at that time Sir William and his wife Margaret with only their remaining young people, some having already married and left the family tree. The mansion was, however, in its original form, four-square, complete, and well proportioned. It is still an integral part of the extensive edifice, and indeed the only portion which can be confidently stated to have kept its outer form virtually unchanged. Disentangled from the elaborate Tudor additions and subsequent demolitions, the Manor House can be distinguished as a complete entity, the exterior, apart from minor matters, surviving essentially unchanged. It belonged to the period of Richard II when it is said of domestic architecture that :

“ Considered as mere masonry, it is impossible to surpass the accuracy, the firmness, the high finish of the work.”

At all events the foundations and cellars with their walls three feet thick throughout have survived in substantially (in very truth) the same form for nearly 600 years ; they were certainly designed for strength and permanence. Even now the fabric, albeit worn

and dilapidated in parts, looks as if it would stand for a few more centuries. Out-buildings of lighter construction, which cannot now be identified, and detached kitchens may have been situated close to the north side of the house.

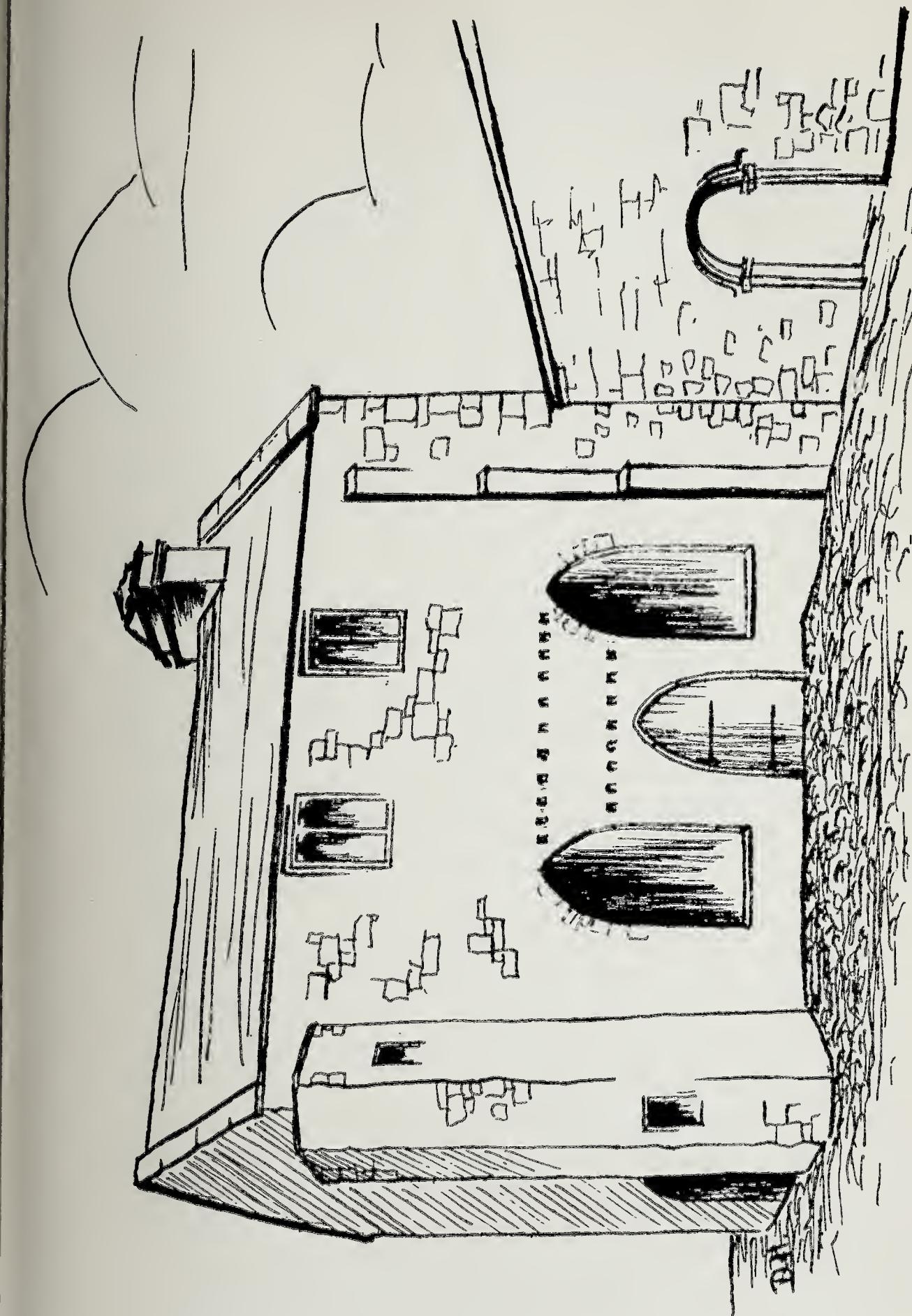
As with most old houses, modifications, demolitions and additions have been general at various epochs, some skilfully planned in elegant style, but others clumsily and without due consideration for the unity of the whole ; yet in spite of all this the Bonville Manor House stands as a tribute to that craftsmanship of which the Builder could be justly proud.

The original Manor House built by Sir William Bonville was, in February, 1951, the subject of two fascinating articles in *Country Life* (by whose courtesy four of the pictures are reproduced here). In these, Christopher Hussey, who had examined the whole mansion in detail, assigned the date of construction to the last quarter of the fourteenth century, perhaps about 1380. The fact that fourteen years earlier the Builder is known to have dwelt in a less esteemed dwelling helps to confirm the date.

The general design is the simple parallelogram, the common plan of manor houses in the Middle Ages.

In the little pen and ink sketch (opposite) the artist has closed her eyes to the ravages of time and the attentions of later restorers, and shows the completed dwelling as the Builder himself contemplated it, with its simplicity, dignified proportions, symmetry and gracious sense of unity. The photograph facing page 18 shows the same view as it is to-day.

The main front faces almost due west ; in the centre is the fine pointed doorway still in good state of preservation. Three other original doorways will be noticed later. It is evident that the front door was flanked by (what were) tall handsome Gothic windows,



DIAGRAMMATIC SKETCH of the ORIGINAL BONVILLE MANOR HOUSE as the Builder saw it, and as it still stands when relieved of the heterogeneous alterations and additions, except two top windows. The hexagonal turret on the left contains a newel staircase, entered by a (now blocked) Gothic door on the ground floor leading to the Gallery or "Chambre" to which an exactly similar doorway above gives access. Part of another original door, exit to the kitchen and other outbuildings can be seen just beyond the turret. The putlog holes, regularly and symmetrically placed, probably upheld some kind of porch, supported by pillars.

some twelve feet in height, one on either side. Two coupled trefoil-headed windows evidently later lighted the upper part of the Hall.

The hexagonal turret at the north-west corner is really the key to the complex arrangement. It contains a newel staircase leading from the ground floor directly up to the gallery. Both the entrance to the turret on the south face (now blocked) and that at the top of the stair are identical original Gothic doors. There are clear indications that the turret was indeed hexagonal, and therefore extended towards the north, a little way beyond the house ; when it was planned to add the Tudor to the north wall, part of the turret was sliced off. Of the six equal faces of the turret the one in the south contained the door. The third face which can be seen in the picture is only half the width of the others, showing that part of it had been cut off. Moreover, in this face a window has been cut away and blocked up, leaving half its stone lintel in position. It now appears as if it were fitted closely into the angle.

The small room (or Oratory) over the south entrance, was built later ; it encompasses the stout flat buttress extending from ground level almost to the eaves.

A plain modern tablet, dated 1840, relates to the work of the seventh Baronet. (See page 18.)

Attention is at once arrested by two rows of what appear to be putlog holes, regular and symmetrical as to position and shape. The lower row is just above the stone arch of the front door and the upper row slightly wider and higher. As these holes are neatly fitted in between the Gothic windows, whatever it was that they supported must have been in position at a time when these lights were still in use ; it can be assumed therefore that they were part of the

original west front. Close investigation shows that these holes penetrated only the outer part of the exterior wall ; moreover they are slightly splayed, indicating that the logs which they held were diverted outwards. This gives rise to the conjecture that the putlogs must have upheld some kind of porch for protection against the weather, perhaps semi-circular supported by pillars round the periphery. Such a porch was a not uncommon feature in cases where the entrance was on the ground floor. The ground here slopes down towards the south gate, so the courtyard itself would be well drained, but the actual entrance door almost on a level with the floor inside would need some protection against rains.

The west front has been cruelly mishandled, as can be seen from the picture : battlements have been added which spoil the proportions by making the house appear too tall for its other features ; the small room in the south-west angle seems to have cramped the space ; the fine hexagonal turret has been spoiled by mutilation, while the disgraceful blocking up and botching of windows can never be condoned, whoever the culprit. Coming round to the east elevation (seen facing page 147) the flat buttress can be noted, pair to the one on the west to strengthen the wall on either side of the great chimney. Among the heterogeneous display of windows and remnants of windows, traces can be seen of another pair of tall Gothic windows balancing those on the west. On the top floor three coupled fourteenth-fifteenth century windows are opposed to, but do not balance, the earlier ones on the east. A small cellar door is visible at a much lower level, also an exit from the Hall of a later date.

The pitch of the roof seems more steep than in some similar houses. The squat coupled chimneys with Gothic capping and louvres are, in a rather

unusual manner, situated *astride* of the ridge ; they are near but not quite at the south end of the gable, reminiscent of those at Motcombe, near Shaftesbury and at old Woodstock. There is a passage right round the roof.

It is uncertain, but rather unlikely, that there were any other windows in the lower apartment—none can be desctried—but, as the original Gothic ones were tall and well deployed, they would ensure ample light for the lofty interior as well as some illumination for the Chamber above.

On the north face of the Manor House another original doorway is to be seen but it is *inside* the present house where the Tudor addition is built on to the exterior wall of the old house. It evidently opened into the courtyard, so there is no doubt whatever that this door being behind the screens was the original exit from the Hall to the kitchens and then outbuildings. It has a beautiful pointed arch narrower but in other respects identical with the above-mentioned three. It is recessed in the three foot wall which gives it a kind of rudimentary or hooded porch. It is particularly interesting to note that this doorway, although now in the middle of the house, was an original one before any additions were made, showing conclusively the full length of the original building and the thickness of its walls.

The four doors and four windows being almost identical, may be regarded as belonging wholly to the original design. Fortunately they are still in good condition.

THE INTERIOR.

As one would naturally expect, the interior like the outside, conforms to the usual mediaeval plan for manor houses, the principal feature being the large

open Hall. This was a handsome, lofty and well-lighted apartment, occupying the whole of the ground floor, measuring approximately forty feet by thirty feet, stretching from wall to wall in both directions, and extending the whole height up to the rafters. Comparing this hall with those of others in the west country such as Bradley Manor, Lytes Compton and Meare, it is seen to conform to the fashionable plan of the period, that is a simple well-proportioned rectangular structure consisting of the large lower apartment divided by a screen, with small rooms behind it, and an upper chamber or gallery of less extent over the screens.

Sir William Bonville, the Builder, probably knew well these houses, particularly Meare Manor House, near one of his estates in Glastonbury ; this was built by Abbot John Kent in the reign of Edward III, and is described in Collinson's *History of Somersetshire* as : "A fair large Hall partly covered with lead, partly slate with eight fair chambers, a chapel, kitchen, buttery and pantry and the offices suitable." This was, of course, larger than Shute, but even to-day in both the Manor House and the Abbots Fish House at Meare one can trace the idea of the Hall with great fireplace, and also the gallery which extends over only a part of the Hall, over the screens. Actually to view the Bonville house at the present moment one stands aghast at the complicated arrangement of walls, doors, rooms and stairs, altered and altered back, ancient and modern. The unravelling of the tangle has been fascinating.

On entering the front door which opens directly into the Hall, the most striking feature is the colossal open fireplace, spanning almost the whole width of the building, with a hearth recess nearly ten feet deep. Contemplating the chimney breast, one can see the

necessity for the two great flat buttresses on the outside walls on either side, which have fortified the walls effectively all these years. It is easy to imagine the great fires that would be piled up on the enormous hearth, ever replenished by huge logs from the nearby woods, and never allowed to go out. How the retainers and the family would appreciate the warmth which must have filled the vast room, and the heat radiating from the stonework all round! A small bake oven on one side of the hearth would not be at all adequate for the needs of the family ; hence one must presume the outside kitchen and bakehouse.

The raised platform or dais of stone covering about half of the floor space of the Hall (about twenty feet) is in its original position. On this dais the High table would be situated transversely across the Hall. The screens would be in the same plane but slightly behind this table. At the High table one can readily picture my lord presiding in the middle with his family and guests all sitting on the long side, while the men and women of the household lounged or ate comfortably “below the salt” by the glow of the fire roaring up the great open chimney ; surely when the smoking boar’s head or baron of beef were borne aloft, one can almost see all eyes turning towards the savoury odours.

It is obvious that in the limited space available, there would be no room for the kitchen and bakehouse, so these would be located outside in the courtyard, in separate out-buildings ; this was the usual plan when a commodious kitchen was required. Before the fifteenth century, permanent offices and out-buildings do not appear to have been general, and as most of these were of timber, it was a wise precaution to have them detached on account of the danger of fire from these great open hearths and ovens.

Considerable light is shed on the apartments by Bonville in his last will and testament, dated 1407, cited earlier in this story. He was indeed a proud owner of his house and possessions. He bequeathed to Alice his second wife the "appurtenances" of various rooms in his "manner house at Shute." It is unfortunate that he does not specify the utensils in the kitchen and domestic premises, for these articles were then regarded as of such a high value that they were handed down as legacies, and it would be enlightening to know what they actually were, for the domestic possessions of a knight were important enough to be heritable. The most important matter from the point of view of this story is that he specifies the rooms in his new house to which the "appurtenances" belonged, namely, "ma salle, ma chambre, Panetrie, Botellie, Cusyne and Pestrine."

"Ma Salle" is without doubt the great Hall, already described. There would be plenty of room behind the screens for the pantry and buttery, which would, as in current usage, be placed together conveniently close to the High table, for the serving respectively of bread and drinks. As ale and cyder were the customary beverages in the west country, much more space would be required than could be allotted in such a buttery; therefore the casks and barrels would be kept in the spacious cellars underneath the Hall. Access to these was obtained by the small low door on the east side.

So, the apartments which Bonville specified have all been neatly disposed on the ground floor with the exception of "ma chambre."

"MA CHAMBRE."

We can be fairly certain that "Ma Chambre" which Bonville mentions was the gallery above the



[By permission of "Country Life"]

CEILING OF FOURTEENTH CENTURY HALL. The Great Hall was originally a fine lofty apartment extending from the ground floor to the rafters of the ceiling, culminating in the splendid trussed and braced roof which is still to be admired. At a later date the floor of the Gallery or Retiring Room was extended to form the complete Chamber. The peculiar-looking fireplace may have been inserted at the same time, when the warmth from the fireplace in the Great Hall was cut off. The grandeur of the ceiling has been spoiled by the diminished height and the modern tie-beams have spoiled the appearance of the ceiling still further.

screens ; such a position would have points of similarity with that of Sutton Courtenay, built a little earlier, also those of the two houses of the period at Meare. It is more than probable that the floor of this gallery originally extended over merely a part of the Hall forming a wide space like a minstrel's gallery, which was used also as a retiring room. It was becoming more and more customary in that era for my lord and lady to withdraw from the public Hall after meals to their own Chamber, and there to entertain guests, transact business and eventually to retire to rest, all in the same place. It is difficult to say how wide such a Chamber would be, but if the gallery were the full width of the Hall here (30 feet), as it probably was, there would be ample space for one or two good-sized apartments.

As far as we can judge at this distance of time, this would be the position of the Chamber, but a strong argument in support of this contention is to be found in the position of the hexagonal turret. The Builder had taken the trouble to erect, probably at considerable trouble and great expense, a hexagonal turret with a newel staircase ; a fine door on the ground floor communicated thereby with the other door at the entrance to the Chamber. When this was built apparently its sole purpose was to approach the gallery. It seems likely that all this would be for the comfort and privacy of the master of the house, rather than for any less important reason such as a minstrel's gallery.

At a later period the floor of the gallery was extended and a full-sized Chamber resulted.

The Chamber is a striking room to this day. The great oak ceiling, though still fine, must, in its heyday, have been remarkably beautiful ; it is of the arch-braced type usual in this part of the West country,

and in some ways similar to that of the Hall at Lytes Cary, near Ilchester, having immensely stout cross beams and three tiers of cusped wind braces, the middle row inverted. Pine tie beams of a much more recent date spoil the sweep of the vault, giving an illusory impression of lowness to the ceiling. Some authorities have expressed the opinion that the level of the floor of the Chamber had been raised, and that the impression of lowness is due to that. But quite definitely if the floor had originally been lower there would have been *no means of access to it* at all, for the present doorway would have been too high, and there is no sign whatever of any other door. Moreover, an ancient stone corbel table still exists under the floor joists, showing certainly the original position of the floor. If, however, the Chamber originally extended only to the width of a gallery, the height would not have been disproportionate ; the beamed roof would have been the lofty canopy of the Hall from the ground floor, making it an extremely handsome apartment. In such a case the Chamber would be adequately warmed from the great fireplace below and efficiently lighted by the tall windows.

Examination of the windows in the Chamber shows that those on the west have coupled trefoil-headed lights of the late fourteenth century, but those on the east belong to a period nearly a century later. As there are three of these on the west, it seems that they must have been inserted when light from those of the Hall below was cut off. On the east wall the stonework shows signs of disturbance, and a wide embrasure filled in. Perhaps at one time there had been two wide windows on either wall, subsequently a third was required. Somehow one feels that there must have been symmetry and shapeliness in walls such as these.

'The old grey house keeps its own counsel, and we

can do little more than hazard a guess at some of the secrets that it holds for ever. No one can really probe them with any certainty, for it is one of the minor tragedies of its passing, that few records, deeds or plans have survived.

At Shute the Bonvilles and their progeny lived for upwards of 250 years and flourished exceedingly. At first it seemed as if good fortune, honour and prosperity crowned their days, but in the end tragic misfortune overtook them and wiped out the name for ever.

Still, we can be grateful to the Builder and his craftsmen that the work of their hands has brought us lessons of skill, integrity and foresight.

CHAPTER III

RISE AND FALL OF THE BONVILLES

JOHN BONVILLE OF SHUTE.

Married Elizabeth, of Chewton.

John Bonville, the eldest son of Sir William, the Builder, is always mentioned as "of Shute" but he was the last to use this suffix. He married the above-mentioned Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Henry Fitz Roger of Chewton, whose possessions included the Manor of Chewton and many other properties, with valuable lead mines in the Mendip Hills, all of which came early in life to their only daughter.

John Bonville died in 1395 during the lifetime of his father, leaving William (later Lord William), a little child, only three years of age.

WILLIAM, LORD BONVILLE, M.P.

Born 1392 at Shute, August 31st.

Married (1) Margaret Meriet, daughter of Sir John Meriet.

(2) Elizabeth Courtenay, widow of Sir John Harington, fourth Baron.

Beheaded February 18th, 1461.

What a strange, unpredictable character is shown in the history of this, the last son of the Bonvilles. A gifted and distinguished man, born at a time when social and political changes seemed to augur a prosperous future for the country and its citizens, it would not have seemed too bold to prophesy for him a life of great good fortune. William was, however, passionate and quarrelsome; one can only surmise that his intense nature was his undoing, although

subsequent events show that his friends loved him as sincerely as his enemies hated him.

He was born at Shute, then the principal dwelling of the family, and baptised in the Church there.

The announcement of the entry into the world of this small person was evidently welcome news to his grandparents. The Inquest Post-Mortem on the age of the boy when he succeeded to the properties sheds interesting sidelights on local events.

At that time, there being few written documents, or letters, and of course no registration of births, an enquiry had to be taken to prove the date of any important event. When the wealthy young William came of age it was therefore necessary to hold an enquiry to prove that he was of the age stated.

The Inquest was held at Honiton when several witnesses testified to the date of his christening. Fortunately these depositions were recorded, and have been published among the Facsimiles of National Manuscripts.

These National Manuscripts, interesting and remarkable reproductions, were selected by command of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, under the direction of the Master of the Rolls, in 1865. The ancient deeds mostly in Latin or Norman French were photo-zincographed so that the original court handwriting can now be gazed on with awe and admiration. A printed copy of each in Latin is included in the records, also the translation into modern English.

When we think of the thousands of interesting human and historical stories hidden away in ancient deeds illegible to the general reader, we must indeed be grateful to this Master of the Rolls for his wisdom in initiating the practice of bringing to light some of these treasures.

The evidence relevant to the age of Lord William

Bonville is given in No. 38, an exquisitely beautiful document both as to script and colour.

Facsimile of National Manuscripts No. 38.

Among the Depositions made at that time was included,

I, Evidence of :

“ JOHN COKESDENE, NICHOLAS PENCRRICH, AND WILLIAM HILL : Each of the age of forty-six years and upwards, sworn, and examined and strictly enjoined to speak to the truth of the age of the said William fitz John, say, and each of them severally examined for himself saith, that the aforesaid William fitz John, is of the age of twenty-one years and upwards, having been born at Shute in the country aforesaid on the last day of August in the sixteenth year of the reign of the Lord Richard, late King of England, the Second after the Conquest, and baptized in the parish church of the same vill on the same day about the hour of vespers. And this they well knew to be true as they the said jurors were, on the said last day of August, together elected at Honiton, on a certain ‘Love Day,’ to make peace between two of their neighbours, and on that very day there came there a certain Lady Katherine (the same lady, one of Sir William Bonville’s daughters, who had inherited £20 in her father’s will) widow of Sir John Cobham, knight, and then wife of John Wyke of Nynhyde, an aunt of the said William fitz John, proposing to drive to Shute, thinking that she should be Godmother to the said infant, and met there a certain Edward Dygher, servant to the said Sir William Bonvile, who was reputed to be half-witted in consequence of his being loquacious and jocular, and who asked her whither she was going.

Who answering quickly said: 'Fool, to Shute to see my nephew made a Christian'; to which the said Edward replied, with a grin, in his mother tongue, 'Kate, Kate, ther to by myn pate comystow to late'; meaning thereby that the baptism of the child was already over. Whereupon she mounted her horse in a passion, and rode home in deep anger, vowing that she would not see her sister, to wit, the said child's mother for the next six months, albeit she should be in extremis and die. And all these things the aforesaid jurors know and saw.'

II, Evidence of :

"WILLIAM HODESFELDE, AND RICHARD DAMARLE : And this they well knew because the said William Hodesfelde and Richard, who is one of the parishioners of that church, were present in the said church on that day at the time of the solemnization of the baptism of the said William fitz John to hear vespers, and as soon as the ceremony was over there came one Walter Walsche, the said William Bonevile's bailiff of his manor of Stapyldon on the county of Somerset, and told his master that he had well and finally completed the autumn gathering, both of his said manor of Stapyldon and his manor of Sokke (to the little chapel of which Sir William's 'missal le plus petit' was left in his will by his grandfather), and had brought with him 400 lambs of that year's produce of the manor of Sokke aforesaid, of which said lambs the said William Bonevile immediately gave 200 to the said infant then and there baptized. All which things the aforesaid William Hodesfelde and Richard saw and heard to have been done. And so common report and public talk runs

throughout the country that the said William fitz John is of the age of twenty-one years and upwards."

III, Evidence of :

"THOMAS BOWYER AND RALPH NORTHAMPTON : . . . " Each of them separately examined saith, that the aforesaid William fitz John is of the age of twenty-one years and upwards, having been born and baptized on the day and in the places and year aforesaid. And this they well knew to be true because they were personally present in the said church at the time of the solemnization of the baptism of the said infant, and saw there three long torches burning and two silver basins with two silver ewers full of water, John Legge then Abbot of Newnham and Sir William Bonevile being the godfathers and Agnes Bygode the godmother of the same child, upon whom the said abbot there bestowed a silver gilt cup of the value, as it was said, of 100 shillings, with forty shillings in money told, contained in the same, which as it appeared to them was the most beautiful that they had ever beheld in a like case."

IV, Evidence of :

"RICHARD LUTRELL AND JOHN PRUSTES :

.... " Examined saith, that the aforesaid William fitz John is of the age of twenty-one years and upwards, having been born at Shute and baptized in the church aforesaid on the aforesaid last day of August in the sixteenth year of the late King Richard the Second above mentioned. And this they well knew to be true because the said Sir William Bonevile was on that day at his manor of South Legh busy in setting up certain boundary marks between a parcel of his own land called

Borcombe to the same manor belonging, and the land of one William Walrond, on which occasion the aforesaid Richard and John were present at the special request of the said Sir William Boneville. And then and there came Andrew Ryden, a servant of the same Sir William, and told his master that his son John had a son born to him, upon hearing which the said Sir William rejoicing exceedingly lifted up his hands and thanked God, and immediately mounting upon his horse rode home."

This Inquisition on William's age, as above mentioned, was taken in 1413; this being proved, he was able to claim and enjoy his inheritance.

When his grandfather passed away, the boy being still a minor, all his lands escheated to the Crown during his minority and were granted to Edward, Duke of York. A certain Richard Whytington then Alderman of London was given charge of these estates. The name is not a common one, so it is quite permissible to conclude that this may have been the famous Dick Whittington, "thrice Lord Mayor of London," who lived till 1423. Whytington was well known for his integrity and his sound business ability, so he would be a trustworthy custodian for a child's property in those restless days. It is quite unlikely that, living over 150 miles away, he ever saw the boy, but in any case it is improbable that he could ever have had much influence on him.

Nothing is known of young William's lonely childhood, probably spent either at Shute or in Exeter with his Bonville grandparents. With his passionate and complex nature he needed the help of older and wiser friends. Probably his grandfather's second wife Alice may have been interested, for it is known that they met several times over family affairs.

When about twenty-four years of age Bonville married Margaret Meriet, daughter of Sir John Meriet of Brixham, of the same family as his great-grandfather in Somerset. She was an already wealthy woman who, as her dowry, received the Manor of Meriet near Crewkerne. She did not live long after the birth of her son William ; a year or two later the widower married Elizabeth Courtenay, daughter of Edward Courtenay, third Earl of Devon (known as the "Blind Earl") widow of Sir John Harrington. Bonville lived with her for more than forty years, a long time in those unsettled days.

Bonville was a keen and adventurous soldier who fought in some of the unending series of campaigns of the Hundred Years' War. After the victory of Agincourt and shortly before the Treaty of Troy it seemed as if a new world were opening for him. As a knight he proceeded to France in the retinue of the Duke of Clarence (brother to Henry V) in 1418 ; after the defeat and death of his liege three years later he returned to England. In the *Chronicles and Memorials (Rolls Series)* No. 22, it is stated that he "rendered unceasing service to Henry VI from 1418 till within a short time previous to his tragical end."

Yet for the succeeding twenty years, the most valuable years of his manhood, it is unaccountable that there is no record whatever of his work and appointments. On his return to England, he was made Sheriff of Devon, and was also summoned to Parliament in 1448-1460 ; the proof of his sitting is given in the Rolls of Parliament.

He was ever a fighter, and in the intervals during these years seems to have spent his time in interminable quarrels and disagreements with his neighbours. Sir William Pole, the Antiquary, mentions among other incidents :

“ Bonville entered into certain lands but ‘ controversies arose betwixt Banfield, Hungerford and Hill claymyng the land as right heires. But Bonville prevailed or them.’ ”

Again later at Peamore in the Hundred of Exmouth :

“ Elizabeth Cobham (his aunt) which died without issue . . . and thereupon question arose between Sir William Bonville . . . but Bonville carried away this and the greatest part of the land.”

Charleton writes :

“ By vertue of a remainder in an entaile of this land the Lord Bonville enjoys this land, not with standing the clayme of Banfield, Hungerford and Hill.”

It was during this period that Bonville extended his Deer Park.

Another story is told in *Newenham Abbey* by James Davidson : In the year 1428 a certain Lady Brooke, Bonville’s Aunt, widow of Sir Thomas Brooke of Weycroft Manor, purposed to make a park round her estate and in the course of the formation of this, planned to enclose several public roads and paths in the immediate neighbourhood. Sir William, champion of the rights of the townsfolk (or possibly for less meritorious reasons) challenged the rights of the lady. The Abbot of Newenham was appointed arbitrator and discussed the circumstances at great length, finally deciding on every point in favour of the knight, and decreeing that “ all the ways in question should be thrown open to the public.” He then directed that on a certain day “ the knight and lady should ride amicably together to Newenham Abbey, where they could exchange a kiss in token of peace and friendship and dine together at the Abbot’s table.” It is said (perhaps optimistically) that they “ continued in great love and amity.”

Another “embracing” is recorded by several writers: There were constant feuds between the Courtenays and Bonvilles, even though Lord Bonville’s second wife, Elizabeth, was a Courtenay and his daughter Margaret Bonville was married to his neighbour, Sir William Courtenay of Powderham and Colcombe. Their squabbles were common talk; even one of the Paston letters from the other side of the country describes “Great variance between the Earl of Devonshire and Lord Bonville as hath been for many a day.” These passionate families lived too near each other, especially when Bonville was at Wiscombe. On one occasion the most violent quarrel arose about a dog-fight, and although friends and neighbours made efforts to appease the combatants, and although this time they did again lovingly embrace each other after a fight, the feud continued, and frequent clashes took place. So much so that in 1455 it was reported to Parliament that “grete and grevous riotes” were taking place in the West Country to the serious harm of men, women and children, many of whom were robbed and murdered. A Petition was sent

“to the kynge oure soverain Lord, . . . that as well as the saide Erle (of Devon) the saide William Bonevile, knyght, shall bee and abide in prison withoute baile or maynprise, tyll your commission of Oier and Determyner be direct to endifferent commissioners to enquere.”

There are frequent references in Dugdale to the lands and estates which Bonville acquired by Inheritance, purchase or exchange. By the year 1435 he had built up such wealth that as Prince records: “This Lord Bonville was no less than £920 in the subsidy book.” All these claims and counter claims led to endless disputes and lawsuits about the “right of dower,

of honors, castles, boroughs, manors, chases, parks, hundreds and fees" consequently frequent battles between Lords and their servants and retainers. It was almost inevitable that after the long wars in France, returned solidiers with hatred in their hearts and hunger in their stomachs should roam the country seeking work, ready to join issue in any feud. Primarily the strong feelings roused by the York and Lancaster factions were responsible but if there had not been savage emotions before, perhaps the Wars of the Roses would have been less disastrous.

Lord Bonville, in spite of his somewhat puerile squabbles, was a fine soldier, evidently appreciated by the king, for Henry VI made him Seneschal of the Duchy of Aquitaine. In 1442 Bonville was appointed to serve the King for one whole year, bringing with him 200 men at arms and 600 archers.

During his later years few tales are told of him. At one time he commanded an expedition from Plymouth to Bordeaux with twenty-five ships and 600 archers. Later he was commissioned to serve the King upon the sea for "the cleansing of robbers and pirates," a task which one feels would be after his own heart.

In 1449 he was summoned to Parliament among the Barons as Lord Bonville of Chewton Co. Somerset; this seems to be the first time that reference is made to him as "of Chewton," his maternal inheritance.

Among other honours he was made Governor of the Castle of Exeter for life. One of the last acts of the unfortunate King Henry VI was to nominate Lord Bonville a Knight of the Garter on February 8th, 1460-1, in the Bishop of London's Palace, very shortly before his tragic end. This was confirmed in 1453 by the College of Arms; he was never installed.

The Hundred Years' War had hardly ended when, in 1455, the Wars of the Roses began. In both of these conflicts the scions of many of the noble families of England were among the slain, but the "murderous mêlée" of the last, simply decimated the aristocracy on both sides of the struggle. It is estimated that in those thirty years, twelve princes of the blood, two hundred nobles and ten thousand gentry perished. Among these fell the last of the Bonvilles.

Lord Bonville had always been a stout supporter of the Lancastrians but in 1455, apparently quite suddenly, he espoused the Yorkist cause. Vigorous and faithful, he had ever served King Henry VI, responding immediately to every claim or demand until those last tragic and unaccountable years. From that time on it seemed as if "fury haunted him for revenge."

As no question of principle was involved in these Wars, it was comprehensible that nobles should change sides, carrying their followers and retainers along with them. As the tide of fortune changed against the poor demented Henry VI, some may have felt that the wisest course would be to follow the Yorkists, yet somehow that would not seem to have been Bonville's way, particularly after his long years of devoted service. Strong influences must have been at work to cause him to transfer his allegiance from the House of Lancaster to that of York. Possibly his second wife, Elizabeth Courtenay, may have brought him into closer relations with her staunch Yorkist family, and doubtless he frequently met other supporters of the same cause.

Moreover, the marriage of his grandson, Wm. Lord Harington to Katharine Neville, sister of "the great Earl of Warwick, the king-maker" forged a strong link between the two families, and Yorkist Warwick

had, of course, a strong influence over all those around him. The family of Nevilles were among the most powerful and influential among the patrician nobility of England, the ramifications being widely extended in society, Church and State.

Lord Bonville lost his only son William, as well as his youthful grandson, William, Lord Harington. When he had seen them both slain before his eyes by the Lancastrians at the Battle of Wakefield in 1460 it is not difficult to understand his violent reaction to that party.

At the first Battle of St. Albans, Henry VI was taken prisoner by the Yorkists, and by the irony of fate his faithless subject, Lord Bonville, was given the custody of his sovereign ; Henry begged him to stay by his side. A year later, at the second Battle of St. Albans, Bonville himself was taken prisoner. Far from accusing the traitor, the generous and kindly King promised him that no harm should come to him. However, the vindictive fury of the Queen, and the Earl of Devon (his arch enemy) prevailed, and on February 18th, 1461, he was beheaded. He was sixty-nine years of age. In spite of all that he had done for the Lancastrian cause, during long years of his life, the whole of his estates and goods were confiscated at his death.

When high feeling had abated somewhat, already in the same year, a revulsion of sentiment took place in his favour. His widow Elizabeth was richly endowed by King Edward IV with very large assignments out of the vast properties which had been confiscated, including many manors in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset, "in regard that he had stood up so stoutly against the Lancastrians." Buswell tells us that in the first year of Edward IV, Lord Bonville was "restored in blood" by Act of

Parliament, the effect of which would be to render his estates heritable by his lineal descendants. One cannot help feeling that there is much which is still obscure, for, in spite of all, Lord Bonville must have been held in high esteem.

It is a tragic story, and one which could hardly have been foretold for the little boy born in the peaceful grey house at Shute.

Of the later Bonvilles :

Lord William Bonville's only son, another William, born 1416, as already related, married Elizabeth, heiress to the fifth Lord Harington. According to the post mortem following his death, the lady had died before her father, so her husband, *jure uxoris*, bore the courtesy title of Lord Harington during the few months before his death. He never inherited the Bonville title as both he and his young son died together before his father in the Battle of Wakefield, December 31st, 1460.

The young lad, the last male of the Bonville line, is mentioned in a Chancery Inquisition Post Mortem as succeeding his maternal grandfather, William Lord Harington, in 1456, and as being "of the age of sixteen years and upwards." Yet he married, became the father of Cicely and died in battle before reaching his twenty-first year. He had made a distinguished marriage with Katharine Neville, daughter of the Earl of Salisbury and great-granddaughter of John of Gaunt. She was probably even younger than her dead boy warrior.

As all her male relatives had gone, the vast estates, including Shute, passed to the baby girl, scarce six months old.

There is no room in the present work to do more than mention Lady Elizabeth Courtenay, second wife of Lord Bonville, one of the most attractive figures

which come into this story, and one who must have had great influence over, as well as interest in the little Cicely. She lived at Shute for eleven years after the execution of her husband, when the child and her mother were of her household during the early impressionable years.

It is this Elizabeth Courtenay and her first husband who are commemorated by the wonderful alabaster monuments in Porlock Church. This has been proved beyond question by Mrs. Halliday, and for many reasons it is equally convincing that these most exquisite memorials, "more befitting a cathedral than a retired country church" were erected by Cicely Bonville in her old age.

CHAPTER IV

CICELY BONVILLE, THE CHILD HEIRESS

Born 1460.

She married (1) Before St. George's Day, 1476,
Sir Thomas Grey Marquis of
Dorset (d. 1501).
(2) about 1504, Henry Stafford, Earl
of Wiltshire (d. 1523).

Died 1530, in her eightieth year.

What a tragic figure. Still only a baby when, through the death of all the male members of her family in the senseless struggle between the Houses of York and Lancaster, she became an heiress of the first magnitude. Yet one cannot help feeling a tender solicitude for the little girl.

It is certain that Katharine with her baby retired to Shute and to Porlock with the aged Lady Elizabeth Bonville, and that they stayed with her for some years. Later on, Katharine, the young widow, married as her second husband, Sir William de Hastings, and one can imagine that when Cicely came to live with her stepfather after the death of her great grandmother (Harington and Bonville) she would enjoy a happy childhood with the four young Hastings children, and would certainly there also have come under good personal influences during the formative years of her early youth. Conspicuously successful and able, and a "fascinating" man of the highest integrity, Sir William de Hastings was a devoted Royalist and a great favourite with the King, Edward IV. He held many high offices and was given the vacant Garter of Lord William Bonville; in fact, the king showered honours on him. He was at one time Master of the

Mint ; during his term the first gold piece, called the "Noble," was coined.

Lord and Lady Hastings had been legally constituted guardians of her little daughter, who was of course one of the greatest heiresses in the kingdom and one whom many a young lord would gladly have claimed as his bride. Guardianship of fatherless or orphan children was a trust vested in the king. This was usually given to some court favourite, for that of any young heiress was a lucrative appointment. The Paston Letters mention the advantage to a guardian of having unhampered control of a ward's income and possessions : but it must have been particularly worth while in the case of the Bonville heiress. Under this guardianship, a proviso was made that Cicely's coming of age should be on her sixteenth birthday.

Lord Hastings fell into dishonour a few years later ; in spite of his popularity at Court and his many achievements for the good of the King, he was beheaded. Yet it is remarkable to note the respect with which he was held, for his decapitated body was laid to rest in the Choir of St. George's Chapel, Windsor.

In his will, Lord Hastings mentions "Kateryn, myn entirely beloved Wyff." Katharine survived him by more than twenty years.

A very human article in the will of this lady herself, at a later date, relates to a loan from her daughter Cicely :

"Where I owe unto Cecilie, Marquesse Dorset, certain summes of money which I borrowed of her at diverse times, I woll that the said Cecelie, in full contention of all summes of money as I owe unter her, have my bed of arres, tittor, tester and counterpane which she late borrowed

of me, and over that I woll that she have my tabulet of gold that she now hath in her hands for a pledge, and three curtains of blew sarcionet, and three quishons of counterfeit arres with imagery of women, a long quishon, and two short of blew velvet, also two carpets."

Cicely was appointed one of her executors.

But this is anticipating.

In April, 1464, Lord Hastings being regarded as a trustworthy person, Elizabeth Woodville, widow of Sir John Grey, entered into a curious agreement with him, that he should undertake another trust, to wit that of her eldest son, Thomas Grey (later first Marquis of Dorset), then a boy of thirteen, whose father had died a few years earlier. A sidelight is thrown on this negotiation by the fact that Edward IV was at that very time engaged in contracting a secret marriage with Elizabeth Woodville, the boy's widowed mother, so the lady evidently wished to be regarded as without encumbrances. A curious stipulation, a sort of *quid pro quo* of this arrangement was that Thomas Grey should marry the eldest daughter of his guardian. This may have meant a Hastings daughter, or it may have meant Cicely Bonville, with whom the boy would probably be brought into close and frequent contact. He was, however, ten years older than she was, and presumably, boys being the same in all times and climes, he would scorn to look at a baby for his bride-to-be. Be that as it may, he married someone else; this lady, however, conveniently died young, in plenty of time to allow Grey to claim the hand and fortune of Cicely Bonville on her sixteenth birthday. He thus united the fortunes of Bonvilles, Haringtons, Greys and Ferrers. Thomas Grey had had no children by his first wife, but made up for this in his second venture.

Trevelyan, the historian, calls Elizabeth Woodville's family, "the upstart Woodvilles and Greys, Edward IV's wife's relations." The Queen did indeed heap favours on her relatives ; she arranged great marriages for members of her family, and was far-sighted enough to favour—whether from public spirit or vaulting ambition is doubtful—the marriage of her daughter Elizabeth with the future King Henry VII, thus finally terminating the historic feud of the Roses. The young King Edward IV had just reached the throne and was about twenty-two years of age when he married Elizabeth Woodville, five years older than himself, whom he had met at a hunting party. This strong-minded, handsome and ambitious Queen was able to exercise considerable influence upon the King and his children, Edward V and his brother Richard, Duke of York.

Shakespeare makes allusion to her marriage in the third part of Henry VI, in the rather crude argument between our Lord Hastings, the Dukes of Clarence and Gloster and Edward the King, regarding the bartering of brides. When discussing the marriage of their brother Edward IV, the Duke of Gloster asks :

"Now, tell me, brother Clarence, what think you
Of this new marriage with the Lady Grey ?
Hath not our brother made a worthy choice ?"

Edward the King goes on :

"Tell me some reason why the Lady Grey
Should not become my wife and England's queen."

The character of Lord Hastings is shown by the words :

"Let us be backt with God, and with the seas
Which He hath given for fence impregnable,
And with their helps only defend ourselves ;
In them and in ourselves our safety lies."

The Dukes are annoyed at not getting the brides they wish.

Gloster says :

“ But in your bride (Lady Grey) you bury brotherhood.”

Clarence goes on :

“ Or else you would not have bestowed the heir
Of the Lord Bonville on your new wife’s son,
And leave your brothers to go speed elsewhere.”

These plain words were not apparently tempered by the presence of the new Queen, Elizabeth Woodville, but she was presumably not sensitive about her triumph.

The young girl Cicely would of course have no share in the disposal of her person in marriage, but it has been said that it was Edward IV himself who had a hand in selecting her as wife for his consort’s son. Her lineage was of course splendid and her territorial wealth vast.

Just before his marriage, at the age of twenty-four years, Grey was created Marquis of Dorset and on the same day “ he sat in his habit at the upper end of the Table amongst the knights in Saint Edward’s Chamber.”

He was created Knight of the Garter in May by King Edward IV, at the same time as the king’s own two sons, the Prince of Wales and Duke of York.

Young as he was, he was made also a Privy Councillor.

One of the earliest records of Cicely’s married life is given by Canon Dalton :

“ King Edward IV had resolved to erect the present Chapel of St. George at Windsor. On St. George’s day, 1476, it is on record that, that day being Sunday, the Sovereign and Knights,

amongst whom were Thomas, Marquis of Dorset and others, rode to mattins, and after breakfasting with Bishop Beauchamp the Dean, proceeded to the choir for high mass. To this came the Queen with her eldest daughter Elizabeth (afterwards Queen of Henry VII), the King's sister, the Duchess of Suffolk, Cicely the Lady Marchioness of Dorset, and Dame Anne Hastings ; the ladies all took their places in the rood loft."

Dalton continues :

" This was not in all probability the only visit by any means that the Marchioness of Dorset paid either to the old or the new Chapel of St. George, more especially as towards the erection of the latter of these her two husbands, her own son, and her mother, Katharine Lady Hastings, contributed largely."

It is easy to understand how thrilled must have been the newly-married girl, still in her teens, and to imagine the inspiring visions which she bore in her mind all her life. One can feel what a happy time this must have been for her.

After this, Cicely, the Marchioness of Dorset, took up residence far from the squabbles and intrigues of the court, in the Manor House at Shute, which she made her principal home.

A delightful sidelight beams out from one of the Paston letters, dated June 22nd, 1477 :

" Tydyngs butt that yesterday my Lady Marqueus off Dorset, which is my Lady Hastyngs dowtr hadyd chylde, a sone."

Among his offices the Marquis was made lieutenant of the Tower ; he was in charge of the two young Princes when they were detained in the Tower as a "measure of safety." He seems to have honoured

his trust by escaping to Brittany, taking with him his eldest son, the little six-year-old Thomas Grey. They remained in France for nearly two years only returning to England after the Battle of Bosworth and the accession of Henry VII. It must have been a time of great anxiety for the young Cicely, with wars and rumours of wars, the decapitation of her stepfather, Lord Hastings, and Richard Grey, her husband's brother, and all the ghastly horrors of cruel intrigues ; she must have grieved over the absence, in great danger, of her husband and child.

After the Battle of Bosworth, when Richard III was defeated and slain, Henry VII was proclaimed King. As he had married Elizabeth of York (the daughter of Edward IV, half-sister of Sir Thomas Grey) it seemed as if a new era was opening for Cicely Bonville and her family. When the Marquis returned to England with his son, he was received by the new King, his attainder reversed and his titles confirmed. This small son, "Lord Harynton, Lord Marcus' son" is again mentioned by one of the Pastons when, being fourteen years old, he was made a Knight of the Bath by Henry VII, on the occasion when the king's own second son was created Duke of York.

In the meantime Cicely stayed at home, and brought up her seven sons and eight daughters. She seems to have embarked on her ambitious plans for additions to the Manor House almost immediately after her marriage.

The three elder sons went to school at Magdalen College School where Thomas Wolsey, later Cardinal Wolsey, was also a pupil or pupil-teacher. The three boys were under his charge at the school. Later their father, the Marquis of Dorset, presented Wolsey to the Rectory of Limington on his wife's Ilchester

Estates. This move gives rise to curious reflections. Why was Wolsey lured to the West of England? Could this be accounted for by the very human desire of the parents to have their boys nearer home?

The young mother with great responsibilities, had doubtless plenty of helpers, domestic and social, and many friends, but her piety and strong character stood her in good stead.

A lighter episode illuminates the chequered story of the first Marquis of Dorset, nothing less than a visit to Shute by the King Henry VII: the details of dates and places can be found in "The Privy Purse Expenses of King Henry VII"; these extracts are taken from *Excerpta Historica*:

July 7th, 1492—to my lorde marquis for a ring of gold, 100 pounds.

March 20th, 1495—Lost at the buttes to my lorde marquis, one pound."

Then a visit of the King is recorded in the archives of Newenham Abbey during the time of John, the twenty-third Abbot.

It was at the time of Perkin Warbeck's attempts to gain the throne that the King marched on Taunton with a great following of Cornishmen; Warbeck, however, when nearing the city and hearing of the imminent approach of the King's forces, abandoned his associates and fled. The King advanced as far as Exeter and there dealt drastically with the rebels. On leaving Exeter he stayed one night at the college of St. Mary Ottery and arrived at Newenham Abbey on November 4th, 1497; this was all recorded in the Abbey archives. On the authority of a manuscript now in the British Museum, compiled by Craven Orde, Antiquary, and one of the Officers of the King's Remembrances, it is also recorded that King

Henry VII had visited Axminster on his way to London, via Dorchester.

He stayed six days at the Abbey ; this rather lengthy sojourn may have been primarily in connection with the rounding up of rebels, for during his visit he appointed a Commissioner in Axminster for the detection of suspected parties. Doubtless, the Abbot John would not fail to offer the traditional hospitality of the Abbey to his Sovereign, and the loyal citizens of Axminster would demonstrate their pleasure.

Of the Shute visits, Pulman (by what authority we have not found the source), says, "Much of the interval was occupied with visits to the Marquis of Dorset." This was only to be expected for several reasons : The King's wife was half-sister of the Marquis who, at that time, was known to stand in high favour with his liege, and had indeed only just returned from Taunton where he had been with the King's forces. Moreover, as above mentioned, he had previously taken part in sports with him. As Shute, with its magnificent Deer Park was only distant some three miles from Newenham, the great estates being in parts contiguous, the King was probably entertained at the Manor, shooting, hunting, or pig-sticking or "at the buttes" again. Howlett says : "There is a record that Henry VII hunted in this Royal demesne." It is fascinating to conjecture whether he was actually received in the new Tudor mansion by the young matron with her bevy of little children, or to meditate on the possibility that Cicely, having completed the handsome additions to her home a few years earlier, would be eager to give gracious hospitality to her Sovereign.

The career of the Marquis of Dorset must have caused his wife continual misgiving as his passionate partisanship brought him into serious conflict ;

indeed, it almost seems as if he had headed for trouble. The Manor at Astley in Warwickshire, the chief seat of the Greys, which he had inherited, was situated in a region where the sounds of marching feet and the clatter of arms were usual, so it is hoped and believed that his wife and family knew little of his ancestral estate, but spent long years in the home circle within the grey walls of Shute. At various times the whole household would probably be transferred in a cavalcade to other mansions on the various estates, but since Cicely had enlarged the old Manor House extensively, it must have been a favourite abode, and it certainly became a specially convenient one.

After a life full of excitement, uncertainty and anxiety, Thomas Grey, first Marquis of Dorset, died in 1501, at the age of fifty, leaving Cicely a widow with her fifteen children, the eldest of whom was barely twenty-four years old. It is known that at least eleven of these children survived infancy; this would be a high proportion considering the devastating infant mortality of the times. Presumably, the healthy surroundings of Shute, combined with the care of efficient servants, may have been conducive to this unusually good family record. Dalton mentions the eight daughters of the Marquis: Dorothy, Cicely, Mary, Margaret, Elizabeth, Anne, Bridget and "Fair Geraldine" (of the Earl of Surrey's poem), to each of whom their father left £1,000. Dorset was buried according to the instructions in his will, in his "College of Astley in Warwickshire in the midst of his closet within the same college." To his wife, he bequeathed the "Mannor of Astley and all its appurtenances."

A year or two later Cicely married Henry Stafford, Earl of Wiltshire, who predeceased her by seven years. The later years of her life were filled with good

works. She was a pious, intelligent woman who spent much of her immense wealth adding to and beautifying the churches and manors on her numerous estates.

It is confidently believed that the exquisite Porlock Monuments, to which reference has already been made, were due to her filial piety, as was also the canopy over the tombs of her Fitz-Roger ancestors at Chewton Magna, probably on that account usually known as the "Bonville Monuments."

In 1494, she had inherited from a distant cousin the estate of Knyghtstone, near Ottery St. Mary, which her successive husbands held in her right. It is possible that, after her eldest son had inherited Shute, she sometimes stayed at Knyghtstone, for she was certainly interested in the Church of Ottery St. Mary. Although her possessions there were not so extensive as in other parts of the county, the "Dorset aisle" there is by far the largest and most magnificent of her ecclesiastical works. The erection of this magnificent addition to the church of St. Mary at Ottery was probably completed before 1523. It has a richly decorated fan traceried roof ornamented with pendants and the arms of the two Bishops of Exeter, Oldham and Vesey. Over the entrance, the arms of the Countess appear and the cornice is ornamented with the "fret" of Harington (one of her titles) and the Stafford "knots." The knot is lavished on many parts of her works, making it possible to identify her hand. It is therefore particularly exasperating that no "knot" or "fret" or any sign of the Grey family appears in any surviving part of her mansion at Shute.

Although Cicely added a porch and parvise in Axminster Church, and aisles in various churches, beautiful bench ends in others, as well as the wonderful Porlock monuments, it is the Dorset Aisle at Ottery

St. Mary which is the work of the most supreme beauty and elegance.

Somehow, one cannot help associating the Dorset aisle with her vivid experience in Windsor so long before, and that in it her generous spirit had “ wrought upon the plan that pleased her childish thought.”

No sooner was the Ottery St. Mary aisle finished than she seems to have turned her attention to Axminster, the North aisle of which, erected between 1525 and 1530, resembles the Dorset aisle at Ottery in general design, but is not so fine.

Cicely lived on until her eightieth year ; she died about the same time as her eldest son, October 10th, 1530. In her last will and testament dated 1527, she “ bequeathed her Body to be buried in the Chapel at Astley in the tomb where the late Marquis her husband lay in his College.” She asked that a “ goodly tomb should be made in the Chappel of Astley over the Lord Marquis ” her husband, and another over herself. As she died at Astley Manor, it is probable that she lived in Warwickshire during the last years of her life while Shute was in the occupation of the second Marquis. She left money to pay a yearly stipend of £8 a year to each of two priests at Astley for masses to be said for her husband and herself for eighty years. Alas, long, long before the time had expired, the greater part of the beautiful Collegiate Church was lost. The Nave and the Lady Chapel in which these monuments were originally erected, were completely destroyed in 1530. On the attainder of her grandson, Sir Henry Grey (father of Lady Jane) in 1554, Astley Manor was destroyed also. Both buildings were rebuilt in the early seventeenth century.

A striking sequel to the story is recently furnished in 1951, showing the modern regard for old churches.

A rich seam of coal was discovered running under Astley Church, which, if worked, might have impaired the building. The Coal Board have therefore made extensive excavations, underpinned the whole structure and strengthened the foundations with reinforced concrete to preserve the old Church.

Of the many effigies which were in Astley Church, only three have survived, namely, those of Cicely herself, her father-in-law Sir Edward Grey, and his wife who died in 1485. The three effigies have been placed side by side enclosed by a railing in the southwest corner of the present nave. That of the old lady in alabaster depicts Cicely in the costume of the day, familiar in the pictures of Catherine of Aragon, with the pyramidal Tudor cap, puffed sleeves and full skirt. Bands of embroidery, in which the cross is discernable, decorate the skirt, and the girdle has a tassel. The knight wears the Lancastrian Collar of S.S. : the statue of his first wife shows a young woman with long hair down to her waist.

During her life-time the Lady Cicely was related, either by inheritance, by marriage, or through her own children to an astonishing number of royalties ; she was daughter-in-law of one King and Queen of England (Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville) ; the sister-in-law of another king, and great-grandmother of another Queen of England (Lady Jane Grey). Her grandson's wife was the granddaughter of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, and daughter of the sister of another King of England and widow of a King of France. So, she and her direct issue for four generations were closely related to three reigning Kings of England and four Queens. This was the more remarkable, as the members of the Bonville family were not far removed from the county aristocracy.

With connections such as these and wealth, it is not surprising that her children married well.

We yearn to know more of Cicely Bonville whose early life must at times have been overshadowed by incessant sorrow and anxiety, yet for long years brilliantly illuminated by everything that in those days a woman could wish, great material advantages, successful children, and two husbands. Fortunately, the works of her hands still stand as memorials to the wisdom, piety and greatness of heart of this richly-endowed lady, the last representative of the favoured yet unfortunate Devonshire name of Bonville.

SIR THOMAS GREY, THE SECOND MARQUIS.

He was born in 1477 and had a life just as chequered as his father ; he inherited Shute Manor in 1501, and died in 1530, about the same time as his mother.

SIR HENRY GREY, THE THIRD MARQUIS.

The grandson-in-law of Henry VII, created Duke of Suffolk in 1551, was father of the tragic Lady Jane Grey, and a prominent member of the reformist party during the reign of Edward VI. He took active part in the attempt to put his own daughter on the throne, claiming that she was great-granddaughter of Henry VII. He suffered death at the hands of Queen Mary in 1554, a few months before the execution of his ill-fated daughter.

One of the few facts about him relevant to our story is that during the reign of Henry VIII he rented the fishing of the Axe at forty shillings a year, and that of the Yarty at six shillings and eightpence, and appointed conservators of the fish in the rivers. He would hardly have rented these unless he was occasionally at Shute, and could have enjoyed them.

LADY JANE GREY, the last of the race, the Nine-Days Queen.

Born at Bradgate in Leicestershire 1537.

Married Lord Guildford Dudley, May, 1553.

Queen of England, July 10th to July 19th, 1553.

Executed February 12th, 1554, the same day as her young husband.

Accustomed as one is to the ghastly savagery of the time, one can only contemplate with horror this bloody crime against a gentle and virtuous young girl, highly intellectual and skilled in the arts and languages. Her tutor, Dr. Aylmer, was made Chaplain to Henry Grey in 1541 and Tutor to his daughters. Strype's *Life of Dr. Aylmer* throws some light on the education of Lady Jane Grey.

Our special interest in this erudite young girl lies in the fact that Shute was her father's property, inherited in 1530 and held by him for a period covering the whole of her lifetime. It is possible therefore that she may have stayed here at various periods, for tradition has it that she "lay at Shute," but this is open to question.

The gaiety of hunting and country pursuits meant little to her, for she said, "I wisse al their sport in the Park is but a shadow to that pleasure that I find in Plato." Again she wrote: "One of the greatest benefits that God ever gave me is that he sent me so sharp and severe parents, and so gentle a schoolmaster."

Thomas, Lord Seymour, had purchased her wardship from her parents when she was ten years old, and she was taken into the household of Catherine Parr (whom he married secretly). While they were staying at Wolf Hall in Somerset a journey to her ancestral home would not have been an arduous

undertaking. So perhaps Jane did actually view this peaceful corner of the world. We like to think so.

With the execution of her father, Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk, this branch of the family became extinct, and all their wide lands and estates were confiscated by the State.

The Bonvilles had owned the Manor of Shute for more than 200 years, years of turmoil, stress and tribulation, though years of vast material expansion to the country. All this time the goodly mansion lay far away undisturbed and hardly noticed.

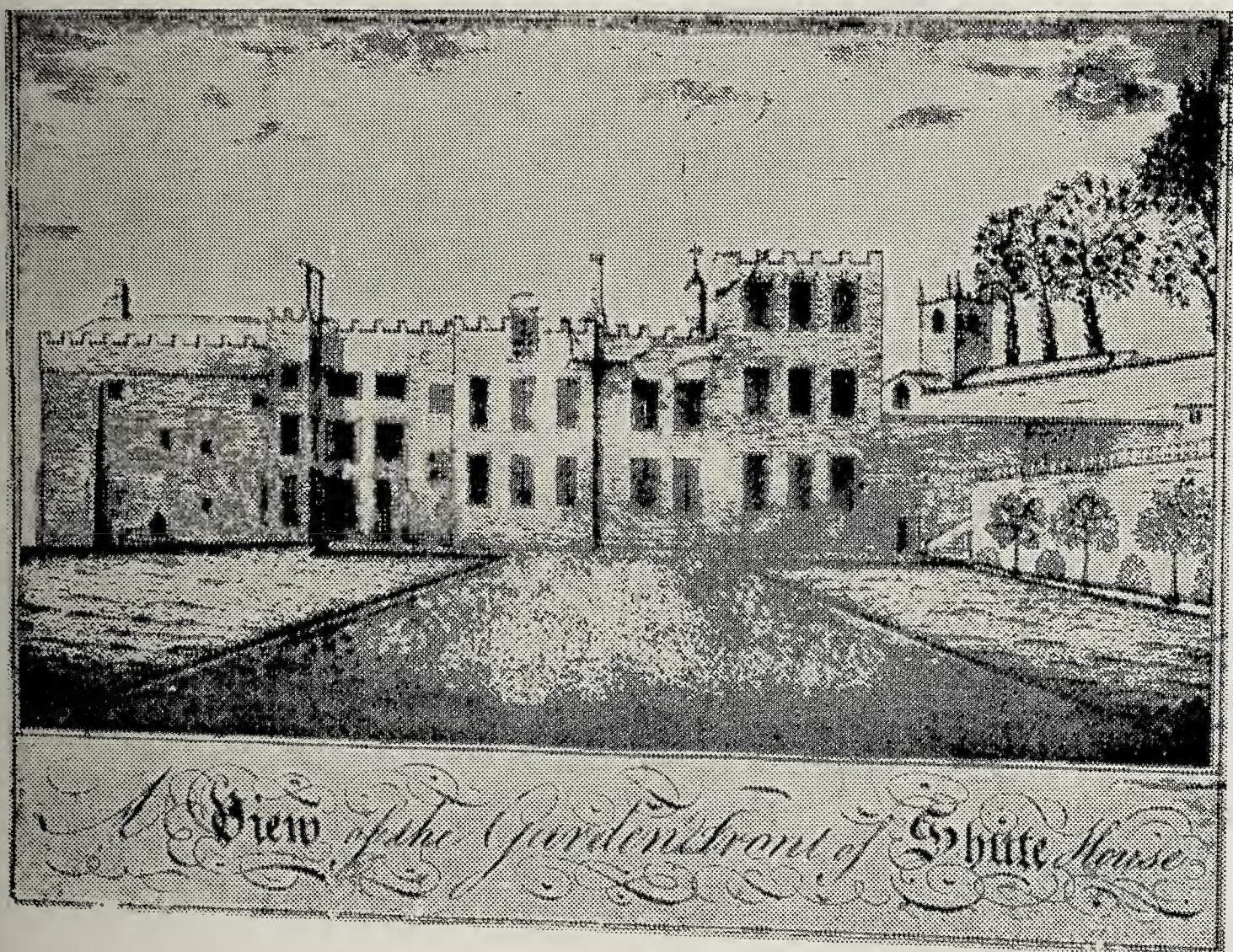
CHAPTER V

CICELY BONVILLE'S TUDOR MANSION

Buildings erected or added during the middle and last quarter of the fifteenth century.

Various theories have been put forward with regard to the sequence of the alterations and additions made during this period to the old Manor House, but, as initials or coats of arms and documents are almost non-existent, we can only rely on the architecture, and claim that human and historical factors governed the timing of the projects.

In the first place (Lord) William Bonville succeeded his grandfather, the Builder, when only fifteen years of age. It is unlikely that any extensive work on such a solid, well-built structure as the original Bonville house would be required during his early manhood, and as he spent much of his life in London and fighting in France, no important changes would probably be deemed necessary. It is just possible that he erected the heavy, studded wooden screen or wall which separated off the kitchen from the Hall at a time when it was becoming increasingly fashionable for the family to live apart from the servants ; this may of course have been authorized by the old Lady Bonville either before or immediately after the death of her husband. It is improbable, but faintly possible, that it was he who extended the existing gallery to form a spacious and complete Chamber. Otherwise, as far as can be discovered, no structural alterations had been undertaken during the first half of the century, so that Cicely's works can be clearly dissociated from the earlier creation. It is during the subsequent period that changes overlap and become interwoven.



A View of the Front of White House

When the Lady succeeded to the estates as an infant, a fallow period would inevitably ensue during her minority, and it seems unlikely, from a practical point of view, that any extensive works would be undertaken until her majority, or even until after her marriage in 1476.

The hand of this lady had long been pledged to Sir Thomas Grey, eldest son of Elizabeth Woodville and it was expected that she would marry him on reaching her sixteenth year. The pledge having been duly honoured, after a short sojourn in London and Windsor, the wedded pair returned to her ancestral home and (as Polwhele records) "enjoyed it."

In the meantime fashions were changing and many of the mansions with which she was acquainted in this flowering period of domestic architecture were of vast extent and great magnificence, far larger and grander than the Shute Manor House; doubtless, therefore, when she returned to Shute she would realize immediately that it was imperative for her to have a more spacious and elegant dwelling, and one more worthy of her social position.

She must have entertained a very special affection for Shute (as many others have done, both before and since), otherwise she would not have preferred it to her many fine estates in the Midlands, Somerset and elsewhere. She deliberately chose to settle down in the comparatively small and somewhat cramped premises, far from Court and from the society to which her birth and illustrious relationships fully entitled her. Be that as it may she made Shute her permanent home and her most usual residence until her son claimed his inheritance.

It is tragic as well as remarkable that, apart from some historical sidelights and a confused mass of internal evidence, so little is known of either the

builders or their designs. We know that the Mansion caught the eye of John Leland, an early traveller and writer, when making his Grand Tour through England between 1534 and 1543. He wrote in his *Itinerary* :

“ I came from Mohun’s Ottery to Colington (Colyton) five miles, by good corne, pasture and some wood. About one mile from Colington I saw from a hill side, Shoute a right goodly maner place . . . of the lord Marquise of Dorset and by it a goodly large park.”

Later Polwhele, in his *History of Devonshire* (written 1793, shortly after the building of the Pole’s new mansion) recorded the words of Leland, adding : “ A great part of a very old seat within the manor of Shute hath lately been destroyed.” It is always a mystery that neither of these gentlemen took the trouble to proceed a few furlongs along the road to investigate the truth for himself. Yet seen from the hill above Colyton, how could the sight of this distant pile have failed to stimulate their interest and excite their curiosity ? Even to this day, passing visitors to the district constantly enquire about it. Again, it is inexplicable that eminent writers on the architecture of great houses seem to have overlooked a place which up to the middle of the eighteenth century must have been a striking picture on the wooded landscape ; even the indefatigable Hudson Turner writing in early Victorian times states that Shute House has been pulled down with the exception of the gatehouse.

How grateful later generations would have been for even the briefest comment.

Of the works effected by the young Marchioness the finest and most important was undoubtedly this handsome Tudor Mansion which she formed by

additions to the original house ; the general design and ornament seem to confirm the period as the third quarter of the fifteenth century. The little Oratory however, seems to have preceded this.

THE ORATORY.

Cicely had known Shute well, having stayed with her widowed mother, and subsequently spent some time there with the aged Lady Bonville (Elizabeth Courtenay). This lady who lived till the child was eleven years of age, although not actually related, would surely have taken an active interest in the little heiress, great-granddaughter of her deceased husband. We do not know if she was an earnest churchwoman, but the fact that Cicely became such an ardent lover and supporter of churches, leads one to the conclusion that in her early years, she must have come under strong religious influences. It is obvious that she had a perfect passion for building ; fortunately indeed, she had also the means to gratify her aspirations. Ecclesiastical buildings seem to have exerted an irresistible attraction for her. This is hardly surprising, since, too, the Bishop of Exeter was her uncle ; besides, one of her progenitors, Katharine, Countess of Salisbury (notable in the story of the Garter), was sister of Bishop Grandisson. It was he who transformed into a Collegiate Church, the beautiful parish church of Ottery St. Mary, the little gem built as a miniature of Exeter Cathedral. It was to this church, in her later years, that Cicely added the magnificent Dorset Aisle.

After her vivid experience at Windsor, just after her marriage, when she was present at the inception of the idea of the Chapel of Saint George, she would inevitably be interested in churches generally ; it is easy to imagine too how eagerly she would follow the

steady progress of that magnificent edifice until its completion, towards the very end of her own life. Without doubt she would have been inspired, though her wider ecclesiastical visions were not to materialize until her old age.

Her earliest essay in building, however, was to be in the humbler sphere of her home—a tiny chapel of her very own.

Although Bonville had in his will mentioned apparel belonging to his chapel, no trace of a chapel has been discovered in the old Manor House. One cannot help feeling that this pious girl from her early days at Shute would feel the need of an oratory of some kind. She could not fail to note on her visits to other great houses, or in her conversations with friends, that, at that time, a chapel was regarded as an essential part of every large mansion.

It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that this little place would be built earlier than the larger undertakings. This contention is doubly supported: first, if at the time the Oratory was built, she had contemplated large-scale additions, she would have deferred its construction in order to give the sanctuary a more honourable place in the fine new mansion; secondly, as the sanctuary was with considerable skill sited in such a way as to leave intact one of the tall Gothic windows in the Hall, it must have been erected at a period when that window was still essential in its position—that is, before the important additions to the old house had been envisaged. Indeed, it would not be surprising to learn that the Oratory had been built even before her marriage.

Doubt has been cast on her part in its planning, but if it was not the design of this lady, to whom can the undertaking be attributed? It is puzzling to determine what bailiff or other responsible person

would have had the necessary authority and power to make such a substantial annexe to the *front* of an important dwelling. Taking the probable period of, say, between 1450 and 1475 suggested by the architecture, it seems evident that, until his death, Lord Bonville was too much occupied by wars and the King's business to give much attention to his distant home ; furthermore, somehow from the stories related about him, it seems doubtful if he would be interested in the building of a sanctuary, unless perhaps as an act of death-bed repentance. His widow, Elizabeth Courtenay, then advancing in years, would hardly be likely to build a chapel at Shute when she had failed to carry out the wishes of her first husband with regard to the Chantry at Porlock. Katharine, Cicely's mother, was little more than a girl when she married a second time, and was much occupied elsewhere.

We are therefore driven to the conclusion that the Oratory must have been the first enterprise of the young bride. There is no doubt that brilliant imagination was brought to bear on much of the early Tudor work undertaken by Cicely Bonville's architects, but of all her works nothing shows greater ingenuity than the interposition of this little building in the angle between the west wall of the house and the south wall of the courtyard (see picture facing page 18). The Oratory, as we may call it, forms a kind of porch or parvise, not unlike those found over church doors ; it is built over the south entrance gate. Evidently from the style of these two, the south wall and the Oratory, they were not contemporaneous, the gate belonging to a period nearly a quarter of a century earlier and the wall not even in alignment with it. This problem has perplexed observers ; but it seems reasonable to suggest that had a wall and gate been

necessary, they could probably have been constructed earlier on the responsibility of a bailiff during the lifetime of Lord William, even in his absence. The massive wall and architecturally correct south gate are well-preserved. Before the erection of the Oratory the entrance was simple and straightforward, wide enough to admit vehicles, and to give access to a horseman riding right up the hill to the front door.

On looking round for a suitable space near the house for the Oratory, considerable difficulty would be experienced ; even when the site was decided upon, it required some skill to integrate the structure into the existing masonry. It would have been impious to demolish the massive recently-erected wall ; this, therefore, was evidently incorporated into the Oratory by extending the stonework upwards to form the south wall of the building. Then the west wall of the house became the east wall of the Oratory, so closely associated with it that the new room was actually built round the flat buttress which, as above-mentioned, supported the great chimney of the Hall. The little place was approached by an external stair abutting the east wall of the porch ; the soft stone steps to this day show the wear of many feet. The entrance into the courtyard is adorned on the inner side by a handsome flat segmental arch with diamond stops to the drip-mould which helps to confirm the date.

The worst problem which confronted the builder was the disposition of the roof of the entrance-way, the floor of the Oratory having cut down the height so severely as to make the door useless. The builder, therefore, resorted to the ingenious but awkward solution as it appears to-day : the floor of the courtyard was lowered by cutting away a deep section in order to bring it down to the same level as that of the

south gate and the farmyard. The courtyard was then reached as at present by four or five steps. It was not a satisfactory solution, for neither cart nor horseman could then use that entrance, though it was and still is useful for pedestrians. When the new house was built a more important front entrance was provided.

The little Oratory is delightfully proportioned (12-ft. x 24-ft.) The lofty trussed and braced roof bears a striking resemblance to that of the Hall in the Bonville House, yet it gives a subtly ecclesiastical impression which inclines one to confirm its first purpose. It must have been most attractive in those far-off days. No sign of an altar site survives, although the position of this in the east wall can easily be visualized. The present fireplace and panelling belong to a later century.

Short flat-headed windows to the south and shapely (later) ones, with tall coupled cinque-foil lights to the north, make it a pleasant sunny little sanctum.

THE TUDOR MANSION.

The date of the Tudor Mansion (differentiated thus from the Manor House) can safely be reckoned as the last quarter of the fifteenth century, probably between 1476 and 1490, for Cicely must have realized from the outset that the old house would certainly not be large enough for her after her marriage. It is obvious that a wealthy and far-sighted woman would wish to bring up to date the old house and to establish a family mansion, which in all reasonable expectation would in due course be inherited by her eldest son and his descendants from one generation to another.

The expansion of the mansion was indeed governed by an almost immediate necessity. Between the years 1477 and 1501, with the arrival of no fewer than fifteen sons and daughters, the old house soon became

quite inadequate for the requirements of the family with its army of servants. One is therefore driven to the conclusion that, apart from the Oratory, the fine Tudor Mansion, elegant and spacious, was the first pre-occupation of the Marquis of Dorset and his wife. It certainly required brilliant imagination and architectural skill to make such extensive additions as were required in the somewhat circumscribed space. We are almost tempted to wonder why, with the immense park at her door, the old Manor House was not abandoned and an entirely new house erected further east, even as far off as the site chosen two hundred years later for the Georgian home.

The mansion, although complete in itself, was actually only an addition built on to the north elevation of the Old House and closely integrated with it. The portion still standing forms a rectangle on the north side of the forecourt ; similarly the east elevation was extended to the north right across the drive as can be seen in the picture facing page 64. This picture, drawn on an ancient map, has come to light only within the last few days ; it is believed to be the only drawing in existence of the Tudor Mansion as it looked when originally built, and indeed as it stood for more than 280 years. It is a far grander and more extensive mansion than, knowing the present appearance, one would have imagined possible, particularly seeing the position under the Church terrace. In fact, the surviving portion that we know so well must have looked quite insignificant when the new place was finished. It might be conjectured therefore that the Bonvilles preserved the Manor House, more as an act of filial piety, preserving it as a "Building of Architectural and Historic" (even in that era!) than as accommodation. We cannot even hazard a guess at the date of the drawing which may have been at

any time between 1500 and 1785, but the formal garden, terrace and the fruit trees on the wall are reminiscent of Hampton Court. The terrace seen on the left still overlooks the sunny sheltered walled garden of more than an acre. It is a pity that the windows offer such a blank aspect to the world, but even so, it is most gratifying that the picture, which throws so much light on the story, should have been discovered just at this moment.

On the west side, a large symmetrical rectangular forecourt, suitable for the large lumbering coaches and horses, may have been in existence before the erection of the great gateway by the Poles. It is, however, not possible to speculate about the full splendour of the west from its turrets and its porch in the centre, but we know that several fine lofty rooms with large south windows were located on the first floor and that large handsome apartments faced the garden. In one of the lower rooms, massive beams carried on brick pillars, solid enough for a church, seem to suggest that immense chambers above had to be supported. But that is pure guesswork.

From the few beautiful mullioned windows with transoms still remaining we can visualize the structure in the latter quarter of the fifteenth century. The general appearance of the whole gives a sense of unity attained by providing the original building with battlements all round the roofs, so that it now all appears to be one. The wide variety of quaint gargoylees also is carried on the string course right round the combined roofs ; many of these are still in good condition, it being easy to recognize even from ground level, the lion couchant, phoenix bird, drake, an occasional face or a flower ornament.

Of course the large square turret on the eastern face is quite the most handsome portion of the whole

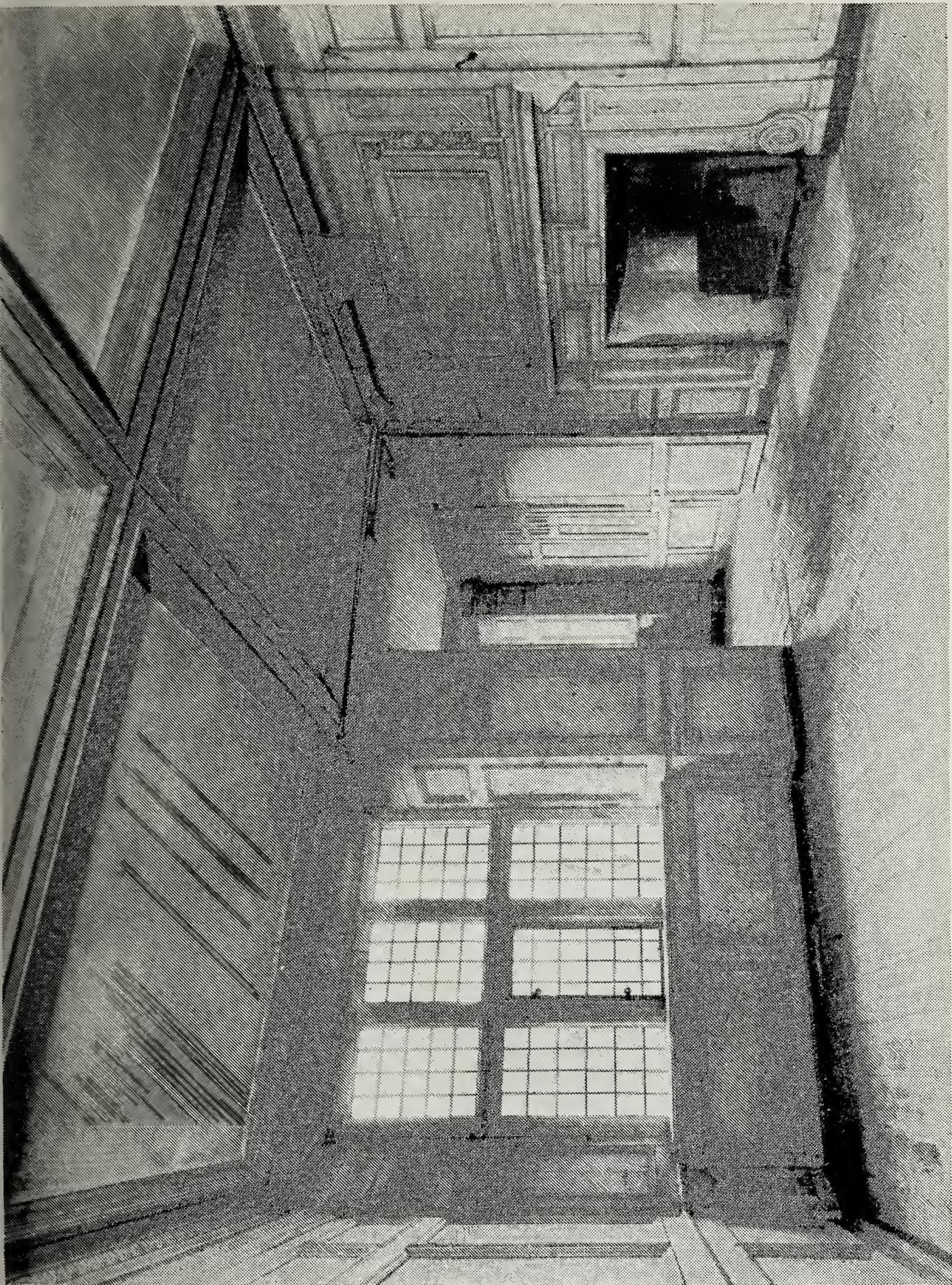
structure. The southern end of this is in direct alignment with the original north face. It is in a better state of preservation than other parts, and still exhibits what were fine mullioned windows on all three floors and all three faces ; some of these have been altered later (see picture opposite). Above the east windows are short string courses with three small ornaments similar to those on the gatehouse which should be noticed ; reference to them will be made when the gatehouse comes under review.

All the new accommodation was in addition to that already existing in the original house, its Chamber, the Hall with vast fireplace, the dais, screens and offices ; the detached outbuildings on the north would have had to be demolished. We came to the conclusion earlier that the lofty Hall extended right up to the roof, in the popular fashion of the time. At some point in the story the floor of the Chamber or gallery was extended to form a complete room. The cinquefoil windows in the east seem to suggest that this extension was carried out about the same time as the larger Dorset schemes. On the other hand the corbel tables beneath, which support the floor joists, (apart from one of the 1380 period) are plain deal, more in keeping with nineteenth century work. The extension would be an awkward and intricate operation but the old Gothic door in the west hall has remained the entrance to the Chamber.

The date of about 1500 has been assigned to the square turret. It was quite evidently added to the main Tudor house, but appears to have been completed some ten or fifteen years later. The turret certainly shows details of a style a good deal later than the house : the level of the string course is higher than that round the rest of the roofs, obviously to avoid the new windows ; the crenellations are more elaborate,

[By permission of "Country Life"]

THE SOLAR IN THE TUDOR MANSION. This handsome first floor apartment was greatly improved by the addition of the alcove in the turret to be seen from the outside in the picture of the east elevation on page 147, but the Jacobean panelling in seventeenth century transformed it into an elegant room. The decorations, the mouldings in the cornice, bead and spindle, egg and dart are still in good condition.



each being decorated with a quatrefoil ornament. Even so, it may have been the last work of the Dorsets, as it is without doubt their finest achievement at Shute. One likes to think that this magnificent work was a *fait accompli* before the visit of King Henry VII in 1497; various items seem to confirm the era. Moreover, it seems unlikely that during the ensuing years the son, Henry Grey, who, as second Marquis of Dorset, inherited the place in 1501 at the age of twenty-six, would have made such an elaborate addition then, when apparently he never made any other later alterations. Externally the square turret gives a specially attractive appearance to the whole eastern front, while within, the charm of two already highly attractive apartments (the bedroom on the top floor and the Solar on the first floor) has been considerably enhanced.

The Solar (facing page 74). Fortunately this room has survived in its original form and is undoubtedly the finest to be found in the great old building. Somehow one feels that when, many years later, the Poles decided to pull down the old house, they left the standing portion chiefly for this lovely room's sake. (Picture, same page.) The apartment must have been a handsome one when originally built, with its fine mullioned windows overlooking the formal garden and countryside to the south-east, but the added square tower gave it the additional charm of the wide alcove or oriel.

This Solar (for this it undoubtedly was) must have been specially designed as a private retiring room when the mansion was built, for the only entrance to it was from the old hexagonal turret. Originally this turret had a door at ground level on the south side, and a newel staircase which led up to the Chamber only. When the new mansion was built, the door on

the south side of the turret was blocked up and the new opening made inside the three-foot-thick wall of the new house. This doorway has the typical depressed arch. From this there was access *only* to the Chamber, to one charming bedroom and to the Solar. *There was no other means of reaching these private rooms, neither was there any communication between them and any other room in the house.* These were the absolutely private apartments of the Dorsets. Even in the seventeenth century it must have been regarded as a very special reception room, for it was greatly beautified by being entirely lined with fine Jacobean panelling. A rich panelled overmantel surmounted the large fire grate. Even to this day the delicate moulding in the cornice, frieze and panels, the egg and dart, and the bead and spindle edgings to the panels are all in very good condition. This work can almost certainly be attributed to the first Baronet, Sir John Pole.

At a very much later period (1840) the new mezzanine or intermediary floor was given a door to open also on to the newel staircase.

THE INTERIM SIR WILLIAM PETRE (1505-1572)

On the attainder and death of Sir Henry Grey, third Marquis of Dorset, and that of his daughter, Lady Jane Grey, all the family properties were confiscated by the Crown, and it was to Sir William Petre, her principal Secretary of State, that Queen Mary granted many of the great estates, including the Manor of Shute. That Petre was a man of exceptional wisdom, character and tact, and indeed a sort of "Vicar of Bray," can be deduced from the fact that

he was knighted by and became principal Secretary of State to Henry VIII and held this office throughout the reigns of Edward VI, Mary, and a few years of that of Elizabeth, when it was only "his age and infirmities" which caused his final resignation. It was indeed a triumph, in those hazardous days, to serve in an important office under four monarchs and to emerge unscathed and with great possessions.

Petre was a Devon man, educated at Exeter College, Oxford, then at All Souls where at the age of eighteen he was elected a Fellow. Prince says that he had all the perquisites for good society, "a gentle extraction, a graceful behaviour and competent learning." He was brought to Court when quite young and found favour in the eyes of Henry VIII; he was then indeed most fortunate in being sent off travelling abroad for five years with a tutor, and an allowance of £125 a year.

He early became indispensable to the ruling sovereigns, particularly during their negotiations with foreign royalities and the Pope.

At the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, landed property was easily acquired, and as a visitor to various religious houses, Petre was in a favourable position to take advantage of his opportunities. Apparently realizing the insecurity of possessions then bestowed by the Crown, in 1555 he appealed to the Pope for a dispensation confirming his ownership.

In histories of Devon, it is frequently noted that Petre had purchased this or that property; thus he gradually amassed a great fortune which was passed on to his descendants. He was therefore able to endow considerable benefactions, the best known of which was the foundation of the Petrean Fellowships at Exeter College for eight scholars to be elected from Devon, Somerset and Dorset. Dorothy, his second

daughter, who married Nicholas Wadham of Branscombe, in Devonshire, inherited a substantial portion ; with this fortune she helped to build and to endow Wadham College, Oxford. Dorothy and Nicholas Wadham, from their pictures a particularly kindly and benevolent-looking pair, had no children of their own, so they worked out the scheme, which, it was said, "beyond sons or daughters will convey their names with honour down to all future generations." Nicholas died before the building was begun, but for the remaining years of her life his faithful widow devoted herself to the work which stands to this day as a monument to their foresight and generosity.

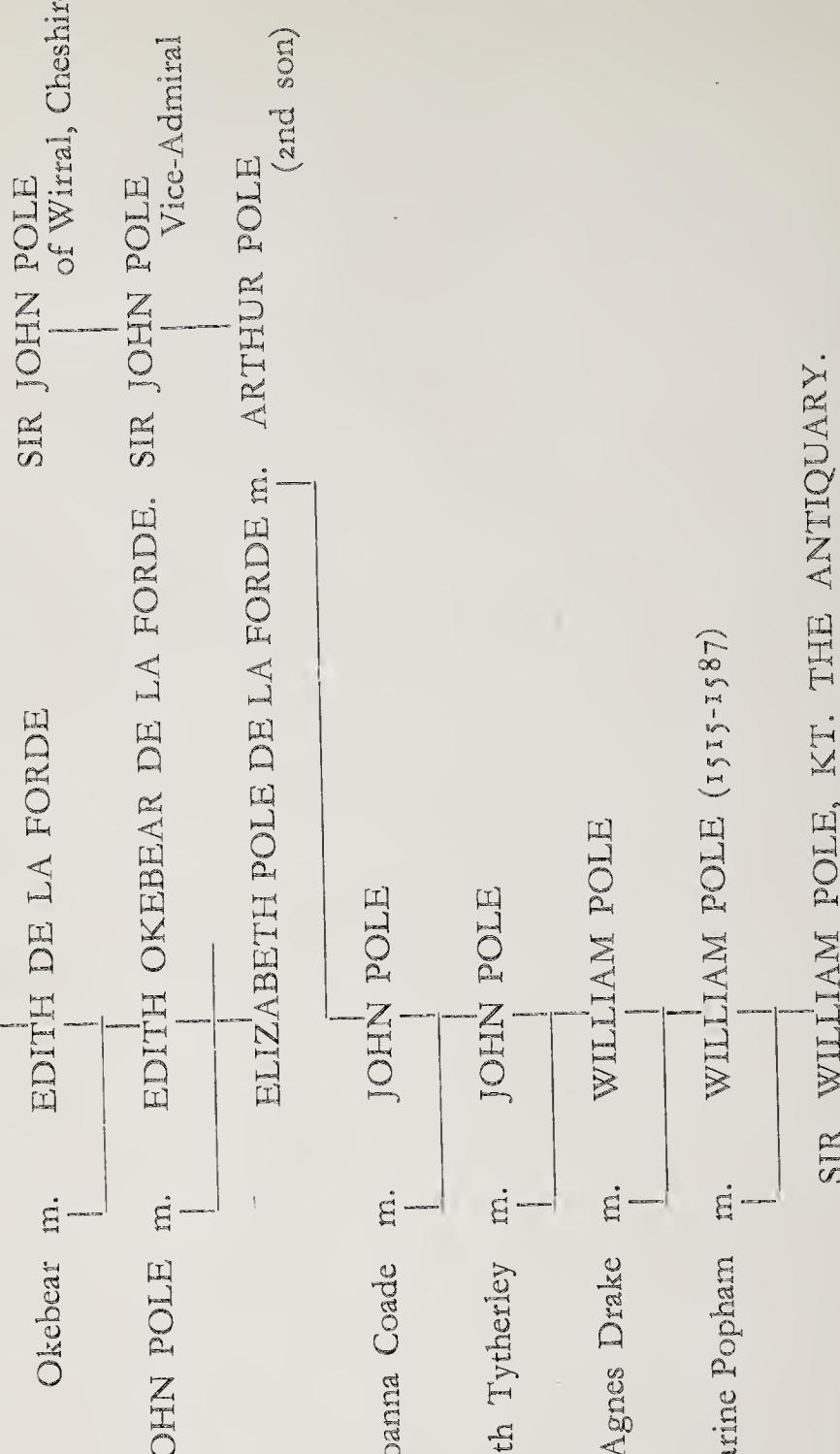
Thus, much of the wealth of the Bonvilles came, through Sir William Petre, to be used for the benefit of young people. It is, however, Petre's connection with Shute which is the concern of the moment.

SIR NICHOLAS BONVILLE m. Joanna
b. 1293

Sir William Bonville
(The Builder, d. 1407)

ALEXANDER BONVILLE m. Hawyse DE LA FORDE
(2nd son)

NICHOLAS (BONVILLE) DE LA FORDE



DESCENT OF THE ANTIQUARY FROM THE BONVILLES, ALSO FROM POLES OF CHESHIRE.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST POLES OF SHUTE

To turn from the turbulent and passionate partisanships of the Bonvilles and Greys to the calm statesmanlike loyalty of the Poles, is like coming from a blustering November evening to a calm sunrise in May. The old grey house which had sheltered soldiers, politicians or exiles must have heard many a grim story in those fierce unsettled days and known many an aching heart, but in the spacious and saner days of Queen Elizabeth, when the Poles first came to Shute Manor, a new era was dawning.

The Pole or de la Pole or Pool family is descended from "an ancient race of honourable ancestors, distinguished in Church and State"; they had founded seats in Cheshire, in Cornwall and in Devonshire. Curiously enough, Bonvilles were among the ancestors of the Shute branch of the Poles, for, very far back Alexander Bonville who married Hawyse de la Forde in the fourteenth century was a direct progenitor of Elizabeth Pole of Devon. His son Nicholas dropped his paternal name and assumed the de la Forde of his mother. Fascinating as is the record of their ramifications, it must be disregarded here, for it is only in connection with the history of Shute that the last-named, the Devonshire branch, comes into this story. Thus Arthur Pole, grandson of Sir John Pole, Kt. of Pole, in the County of Cheshire, son of Sir John Pole, Vice-Admiral of the West of England, married Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of John Pole of Ford, near Axminster, a neighbour and distant relative, and they settled in this county. Arthur was the great-great-grandfather of the Right Worshipful William Pole, Esq., of Shute, but it is

from Elizabeth, his wife, that the Poles of Shute carry the Quartering, Buck's head gules, on their Coat of Arms.

THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL WILLIAM POLE, ESQ., OF SHUTE.

Born 1515.

Married Kateryn Popham (who died 1588, and was buried in Colyton Church).

Mr. William Pole is the first member of the family who is described as “of Shute . . . the pleasant and gentle seat . . . of the ancient family of Bonville.”

Being distantly connected with the Bonville family, and having lived in the neighbourhood nearly all his life, he may have felt a special regard for Shute and Colyton from his youth up.

It was during Sir William Petre's term of office that Mr. Pole purchased the “house, materials and furniture of Shute House.” The deed of sale is dated at Colyford, in 1560. For the fine Manor House, of which the main part had been built only sixty to eighty years earlier, Mr. Pole paid the lordly sum of £300 of “good and lefull money.”

Shortly after this, Mr. Pole acquired the lease of an additional eight score acres of land at Shute. This lease was dated from Michaelmas, 1562, and such was the optimism and confidence of the time that the tenure was to run for 1,200 years, an unusually long period. The rental was £16 yearly.

Mr. Pole lived long at Shute, probably from the beginning of the term of the lease till his death in 1587, a period of about twenty years. This is confirmed by the births of his children: Alexander and William, both christened at Colyton, but Arthur was born at Shute, 1568. It is clear then that Mr. Pole certainly lived at Shute.

His famous son, Sir William Pole, Kt., the Antiquary, wrote towards the end of his days :

“ My father had the howse (of Shute) and park from Sir William Petre and dwelled there during his leif, and left it unto me, and my eldest son John holdeth it from mee.”

This oft-quoted statement is somewhat misleading, for it was written sometime *after* 1618, when John had moved up to Shute after his marriage, and the Antiquary had retired to Colcombe Castle.

A part of Colcombe estate had been purchased by Mr. Pole who had settled it on his son. When Sir William had purchased the remaining portions of Colcombe Castle he “ re-edified ” it and made it a “ pleasant dwelling fit for his worth ” but he did not immediately take up residence there.

Sir William Pole, Kt., speaks of his father as being among the eminent men in the government of Devonshire, and “ learned in laws.” He was a member of the Inner Temple at the time of his first marriage, and at one time its Treasurer, an appointment of great trust and honour. He was a Justice of the Peace for his County, and indeed held office under three monarchs. He held his seat as M.P. for Bossiney only for about a year.

Among the leases and other fascinating documents to be seen in that treasure house, the Muniment Room at Antony House, is his last will and testament, signed by Mr. Pole. On the outside is noted in the hand of Courtenay Pole, “ My Gerate Grandfather’s Will, Wm. Pole Esq. date 1587.” The quaint documents are all old and faded, with odd lettering and spelling, bringing a curious feeling of the immutability of matter.

One of his executors was Sir Bernard Drake, Kt., of Musbury.

William Pole still had possessions throughout many parts of the neighbourhood—Kilmington, Musbury, Dalwood, Colyford and Colyton and Seaton, for he left bequests of twenty shillings each to old people in these parishes.

To Katheryn his wife he left the Manor of Blackdown House.

William Pole, Esq. died at Shute in 1587 in his seventy-third year, and was buried in Colyton Church. His eldest son, only twenty-six years of age at the time, erected a remarkable monument to him there, setting out his pedigree from the Cheshire branch of the Poles, together with a shield exhibiting fourteen quarterings, three crests and the family motto, with its subtle pun, “*Pollet Virtus*.” The Antiquary also erected nearby a monument to his mother, Kateryn, daughter of Alexander Popham, Lord Chief Justice of England.

SIR WILLIAM POLE, KNIGHT: THE ANTIQUARY.

Christened at Colyton August 27th, 1561.

Married (1) 1683 to Mary Peryham, daughter and one of the co-heirs of Sir Peryham of Crediton.

(2) Jane, widow of Roger How.

Sir William died at Colcombe.

Sir William Pole was one of Devon's most distinguished sons. The very name of this renowned historian, conjures up visions of a stalwart old man riding round the countryside interrogating the gentry on their lineage, or sitting poring over musty documents. He was one of the most famous of the later Devonshire Poles, a man of exceptional erudition, a master not only of law, but of history, and yet indeed “beautiful with a very civil courteous and



SIR WM. POLE, KT.
The Antiquary.
1561-1635.

obliging carriage and disposition." He is mentioned too as the "eminent and sedulous Antiquary so often quoted by Mr. Risdon and Mr. Prince." Educated at Exeter College, Oxford, he was (like his father) elected a Member of the Inner Temple, of which he was also at one time the Treasurer, a responsible post necessitating his residence in London from time to time.

From his early youth he seems to have been interested in crests and pedigrees with their related history. He was obviously a man of quite exceptional industry, for the magnitude of his written undertakings would have daunted the boldest scribe. He had wide interests in the County and his own immediate neighbourhood, as well as in Exeter, where at one time he was a Justice of the Peace, and in the last year of Queen Elizabeth's reign, Sheriff.

Fortunately there are still two portraits of him in existence, which hung for over 300 years in the old and new houses at Shute. One of these portraits, reproduced facing page 82, is attributed to Vandyk, said to have been painted during his visit to England, 1620-21; but the picture is not mentioned in Bryan's *Dictionary of Painters*, that comprehensive list of Vandyk's British sitters. It is, however, in Vandyk's style and is a fine portrait, presumably a good likeness, a strong intellectual face showing decision and resolution, with just a suspicion of humour in his dark eyes. The plain style of dress, the moustache and little "goatee" beard belong to that period.

During his whole life the Antiquary had close associations with both Shute and Colyton. He was christened in Colyton Church, but as his father moved up to Shute House from Colyton shortly after this, he apparently made this his home until at twenty-two years he married his child-bride, Mary Peryham, then

aged fifteen years. On the death of his father, four years later, he returned to Shute where he dwelt for more than thirty years, the period during which he was engaged on his great writings. These dates are confirmed by the records in the Church Register at Shute where the births of nine out of his eleven children were christened between the years 1587 and 1597.

His young wife died tragically through a fall in 1605, leaving a young family, of whom the eldest was only seventeen years of age. The misfortune is touchingly recorded on her elaborate tomb in Colyton, where she is depicted with nine of her quaint little children. Sir William married secondly Jane, the wealthy widow of Roger How, whose young daughter Elizabeth (in the fashion of the time) married her stepfather's son, John, later the first Baronet. There were no children of the second marriage of Sir William.

The year after he lost his wife, in February 1606, the Antiquary was knighted by King James I at Whitehall, his name being given as "William Poole of Shute." This honour probably recognised his services in the county and neighbourhood, since the writings for which he was to become renowned were as yet only in embryo.

Sir William is mentioned in a letter dated June 10th, 1622 to the Mayor of Exeter (Historical MS): "I have contracted and concluded the sute between Sir W. Pole and the poore for the somme of £7 to be paid into me upon Mondaie next."

It is not stated whether this money was due to Exeter or to Shute, but from an account of Shute Chapel it appears to have been badly needed there at that time. The Chapel was said to be: "dark and ruinous . . . its door very bad . . . divers articles

lacking : canopy, wedding veil, lantern, insense bowl." The curate had no house of residence and had to sleep in the chapel, though the door was broken and had no fastening. Why wedding veil ? Were wedding veils lent in those days as confirmation veils are in modern times ?

It is as a historian that the Antiquary is best known. Steeped in the annals of his native West Country, he has marshalled and correlated his facts in his monumental works with great ability. On perusing his surviving writings, the reader stands aghast at the industry of the man, no less than at his depths of learning and local lore. He must have encountered almost superhuman difficulties, particularly in deciphering ill-written faded scripts and ancient documents expressed, perchance, in careless, incorrect Latin, Norman French and old English ; the worst were those of the centuries immediately preceding his own, when the popular Court-Hand was grotesquely illegible. Apart from the meticulous exactitude demanded by work of this nature, the physical labour of writing those great tomes by hand with the primitive quills of the period must have been immense. The actual calligraphy is clear and legible, the letters well formed and the spelling, although individual, is consistent.

It is sometimes stated that he had begun to jot down items for these Collections quite at the beginning of the century, and that when he began to consider the matter seriously, he apparently worked on them for over twenty years. Although one of the volumes ends with the date, April 1617, he evidently continued writing, for in a letter to Mr. Camden, dated 1620 (Harleian MS No. 7000 now in the British Museum), he described his vast works as only " an outline." In another place he stated himself that what he had

done was only the skeleton for a comprehensive study.

The modest title of his work, *Collections towards a Description of Devonshire*, is characteristic of the scholar. The Collections were indeed almost as comprehensive as the Domesday Book, for in addition to details about the many parishes of the county, they included the genealogies of the gentry, the Knights of Devon under their several Kings, the Barons and Baronies even to lists of the Sheriffs.

The Rev. Thomas Moore, Historian of Devonshire, writes of the Antiquary :

“ Few men could have united so much perseverance, accuracy and diligence of investigation to affluence and sufficient leisure to enable them to pursue such enquiries with equal success.”

This opinion is confirmed by a letter in the British Museum dated Shute, April 27th, 1604, to Reynell, asking for accurate information about his pedigree, in which Sir William Pole protests that he

“ will deal quite impartially with friends and enemies, not derogating from myne enemies nor adding for my friends anything I cannot authentically prove.”

As these volumes were only in manuscript, in the course of time they became seriously dilapidated ; pages became worn, torn or lost, while the zealous interest of friends to whom they were lent were their undoing. By a final tragedy many of the volumes perished in the disastrous conflagration, when Colcombe Castle was ruined during the Civil Wars. Some additions which had been made by the first Baronet John, his son, also a keen historian, were also lost at the same time.

Fortunately, however, a large quantity of the original manuscripts were rescued, possibly by that

same John, and are now among the treasures in the Muniment Room at Antony. The Collections are written on very fine paper, now yellow with age, but interleaved with eighteenth century protecting leaves, the whole being stoutly bound in leather. In the efforts for the preservation of the works one can observe the hand of his descendant, Sir John William de la Pole, who was a proud and loyal scion of the Poles of Shute. The binding may have been done earlier than 1791, the year in which the papers were assembled and printed in book form. The title page of the *printed book* is inscribed :

Sir William Pole of Colyton and Shute, Knt.
(who died 1635)

Collections towards a description of the County of Devon, Now first printed from the Autograph in the possession of his lineal descendant

Sir John William de la Pole of Shute, etc.
Devonshire 1791.

About a century earlier a copy of the manuscripts had been made by John Prince, a clergyman and historian in the county. He had evidently realized the value of such a history as this and had laboriously copied out in his own hand this vast work. His manuscript is now in the British Museum, under reference "Add. MS 28649" where it can be inspected and perused without let or hindrance. On the title page of this bound folio volume is pasted a faded signature of the Antiquary, "Sir W. Pool," a small scrap of paper evidently cut by Prince from some other document. Another such label bears the words : "Descriptions of Devonshire" in Sir William's own hand with the date, which appears to be 1617 but is barely legible even with a magnifying glass. Prince's copy is entitled : "The Description

of Devonshire by Sir William Pole of Shute, transcribed by John Prince who himself made certain additions, clearly indicated by brackets." Sir John Pole, first Baronet, also made additions, but these cannot be so easily distinguished. Prince's handwriting, close, crabbed, but in good educated style, is easy to read, for although this copy was made more than 250 years ago, the ink is still clear and black.

Prince took advantage of the great stores of information in the "Collections" to illumine his own work, *The Worthies of Devon*, first published in 1701. Here were portrayed the lives of a large number of important men of the County, a generous chapter being given to each. Prince lived 1643-1723 and spent forty-two years of his life in the quiet country vicarage of Berry Pomeroy, so he doubtless had ample leisure for his peaceful business of copying. He did write a few controversial pamphlets, but without doubt his fame rests on the "Worthies," in the preface to which he handsomely acknowledges (as indeed he might!) his indebtedness to Sir William Pole: "He became the first as the best antiquary (for certainty and judgment) that we ever had in our county, it being plain that with this gentleman's labours most of those who wrote since on this argument have adorned their work."

[The present writer, too, has been proud to dip deeply into those wells of knowledge for this modest story.]

Another great bound volume, also at Antony House, is inscribed:

"The Coats of Arms of the Devonshire Gentry drawn with a pen; wherein is the blazon of the coat and the names of the persons by whom born, combined with the pedigrees of various men of noble lineage."

It is a fascinating document. Each little representation is faithfully drawn on strong fine paper with delicate thread-like strokes. He must have been an adept at cutting a quill for the tiny lines and figures are wonderfully clear, even those on which several birds or beasts have had to be reduced to fit the circumscribed labels, all of a standard size. The ink and paper have faded but it is possible to reconstruct the appearance in the heraldic colours, indicated by minute references. That the sketches are remarkably accurate can be proved by reference to the modern standards of the College of Arms.

One can imagine that the Antiquary found considerable satisfaction in carrying out such a labour with meticulous exactitude.

In another immense manuscript volume were copies of deeds, charters and grants all carefully copied; these provided material for much of his history. At the end of one of these last volumes we can almost hear a sigh :

“Copied out of an old Roll and written all with mine own hand.

April 1616. William Pole.”

Sir William must have been a busy man in those days, for, apart from the labour of collecting and writing his monumental histories, and perhaps beautifying Shute, the care and upbringing of his numerous progeny must have required much thought and attention after Mary's death. Beyond all this his public duties in County and neighbourhood must have exacted much time and energy. From an early age he was one of the Feoffes of Colyton, a feoffdom granted by Charter of Henry VIII; the business of this office was no sinecure, for the feoffees were responsible for local government, the school, the large estates and nearly all other matters concerning

the town. The Feoffees were active in all their duties, and regarded them far more seriously than do many similar bodies. Colyton was almost like a miniature city guarded and governed by the Feoffees. The Antiquary is frequently mentioned in the archieves as taking part and as signing the Minutes and Proclamations. A letter still in the records is quoted by Mr. White in his *History of the Feoffees of Colyton*, requesting the attendance at a Meeting of the Commissioners for certain enquiries ; it concludes :

“ And that you bringe with you all such wrytyngs as you, or any of you have concerning the same.

Wheroff fayle not att your perill.

Shute the IX daie of September 1600.

Your lovinge friends

Robert Bassett

William Pole,” and others.

Although the first part does not sound unlike that in a similar document in the twentieth century, the salutation does.

The Antiquary is frequently mentioned in the Diary of Walter Yonge of Colyton and Axminster. This Diary gives a fascinating and illuminating picture of the times both as regards local and national news, not unlike those of Pepys and John Evelyn at a later date ; it is simply and accurately written with transparent honesty, and might rank even as a daily paper. The writer was a calm, zealous Churchman, opposed to all “ points of popery ” and regarded as a Puritan. The Diary covers the period from 1604 to 1628 and is kept with fair regularity. Mr. Walter Yonge and Sir William Pole were evidently friends as well as fellow workers ; in several places he mentions showing letters to the Antiquary and having seen those which he had received.

In May, 1605, Yonge enters the record, without comment, of the death of Sir William's wife at Shute.

In April, 1606, he mentions a Commission whose members included Sir William Pole, also Sir Amys Bonville, appointed to enquire into "arrearages of fines." This is one of the rare occasions on which a remnant of the family of Bonville is mentioned.

At another time, Yonge records that a Committee of the House of Commons had been appointed to enquire why Honiton no longer sent members to Parliament. After this, Walter Yonge and William Pole were found to be the members returned for that borough.

Among the items of news in 1620-21, the diary mentions: "On the 11th of May about eight o'clock in the forenoon, there was a very great eclipse of the sun being a very bright shining day . . . The sun was eclipsed full 11 parts of the 12."

June, 1627. During a period of strained relations and differences between France and England (shortly before the La Rochelle incident) Yonge records, "We began a fortification at Seaton for the defence of that place." A committee, which included Yonge and Sir William Pole, arranged for the erection of earthworks. Colyton, Axminster, Hemyock and other places were instructed to provide thirty men a week, in rotation, to complete the work. A rate of 8d. a day was to be paid to each man. This orderly, competent scheme seems to have originated with Sir William. The work did not progress very far and was soon abandoned but part of the mound of earth survives to this day on Seaton esplanade.

Sir William had inherited from his father a part of the Colcombe estates; later he himself purchased the remaining portions from the heiresses of the

Courtenays. He illumines the transaction in his own vivid style :

“a goodly building was here intended by the last Erles, but altogether unfinished ; and nowe the whole being reduced from all ye co-heires unto my possession, I have newe built the howse and made it the place of my residinge.”

This was after 1618.

Being then over sixty, and having completed his vast task, perhaps contemplating a return to his old haunts, the Antiquary seems to have decided to retire to Colcombe Castle.

Colcombe Castle had been one of the seats of the Courtenay family, and had been re-built on a magnificent scale by Henry Courtenay. Sir William made extensive additions and alterations, but practically the whole of it was destroyed in the Civil Wars. Only a part of the kitchen and great fireplace survived.

That his son John was still living at Colcombe in February, 1618, is proved by the record of the birth of his (John's) second son, Courtenay, at that date, the father's name being given as “John Pole of Colcombe.”

During the thirty years or more that the Antiquary lived at Shute it is probable that he made some structural alterations in the mansion, but as the work is closely connected with that of his father, it will be dealt with in due course.

When Colcombe Castle was completed and ready for occupation, he returned there with his second wife, Jane How. Then, and only then, did his son John come up to Shute with his family, when the Antiquary wrote that he had received the Shute Mansion from his father, and that : “My son John holdeth it from mee.” This was a convenient moment, for Shute

also was ready for occupation, and thanks to the ministrations of the Lady Cicely, was a large and commodious house.

It is just within the realms of possibility that there was a further reason for handing over the spacious house as a home for John, then a Member of Parliament; Walter Yonge in his Diary mentions a Proclamation which had been issued to discourage the gentry from having residences in London. It was put on record that many landlords had left their country seats, neglecting their local duties and hospitality and had gone with their frivolous young wives to London, "to cumber the city." So, in 1617, King James I had commanded them to leave within twenty days. It was certainly autocratic to give such short shrift to the rather harmless folks against whom the order was aimed, but John would probably not be one of these, for he had his Parliamentary duties, as well as other business to do in the City. It is conceivable however, that he felt constrained to make his principal residence in his own county. Of course, there may be no connection at all between the two events, but the dates are significant.

No record of the Antiquary would be complete without a few words about his other children. His funeral certificate in the College of Arms gives an amazing list of his descendants and Dugdale comments that Sir William had "the extraordinary blessing of the Lord, for he saw his children's children's children." These two little lads, John and William, both died as tiny children, but they must have been a great joy to the old man in his last days.

His son Peryham founded the Irish branch of the family, and his seventh daughter married Francis Courtenay. The most renowned of his children,

however, Elizabeth and William, were among the earliest settlers in "Nu England." Sir William was a far-sighted man, and one can be certain that his wide vision had encouraged the younger generations to "fare forth and to seek far hence the dwelling place of strange peoples." On the golden head of Elizabeth a gleam of light is shed by a story. She was a passionately devoted subject of Queen Elizabeth; consequently she gloried in her red hair and her name. Although she was only fourteen years old when the great Queen died, the determined young woman insisted on being taken to London to see the funeral on April 28th in Westminster Abbey. We cannot, therefore, be surprised that in years to come she was described as the "lion-hearted woman who penetrated into the unknown continent, met Red Indians, and parleyed with them." About the year 1637 she bought from the Tetiquet tribe, certain lands on the Taunton River (to which she had given the name). She was said to be a wealthy woman, so it may have been that about that date she benefited under her father's will. She and her brother were among the valiant band who braved the perils and gave all that they had for the founding of this city of Taunton in Massachusetts. They founded also Raynham and Berkeley, all of which are now important towns. These early leaders of the settlers were venerated in their day and generations. It is interesting to note that, born in the tiny village of Shute, they should have carried the Devon traditions to their new home, and that present-day citizens of Taunton still come to Shute from time to time to pay homage at the birthplace of the founders of their city. This deep interest still persists: about 1939, citizens from Massachusetts came to Shute to ask for some memento of their founders. An old oak gate from the courtyard,

dating from Elizabethan times, given to them by Sir John Carew-Pole, the present owner, was gratefully transported to Taunton. Moreover, one of the citizens of that distant city is at this moment at work on the life of this valiant woman, and has been investigating her girlhood on the spot.

The Antiquary died in 1635 at Colcombe Castle and was buried at Colyton under a simple flat stone in the aisle, from which the inscription is being gradually worn away by passing feet. Yet he lives still in his enterprising descendants in distant parts of the earth, in the Old House and gateway which bear the stamp of his personality, and above all, for all time in his literary work.

ALTERATIONS MADE TO THE MANSION BY THE EARLY POLES IN THE LATE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES.

The Gatehouse, Extension of north section towards west, Octagonal turret or turrets.

The span of the adult life of Sir William Pole, the Antiquary, overlapped that of his father, the Right Worshipful William Pole by only a few years, but together as owners of Shute they covered the latter half of the sixteenth century, so it is difficult in the mansion to decide which is the work of the one, and which of the other. Moreover, the differentiation becomes more involved, when it is remembered that both men bore the same Christian name, had the same enquiring minds and the same wide interests.

One might postulate a theory that Mr. Pole, having in 1560 taken a lease for 1,200 years, might wish to put his stamp on the property from the outset, for at the period indicated he would be no longer young.

We know, by his own writings, that the Antiquary "new built" Colcombe Castle some years after the death of his father who had purchased a portion of that estate. So, whether he did this in emulation of his father's work, or whether he himself, having completed all he felt needful at Shute, turned his attention to Colcombe, is problematic.

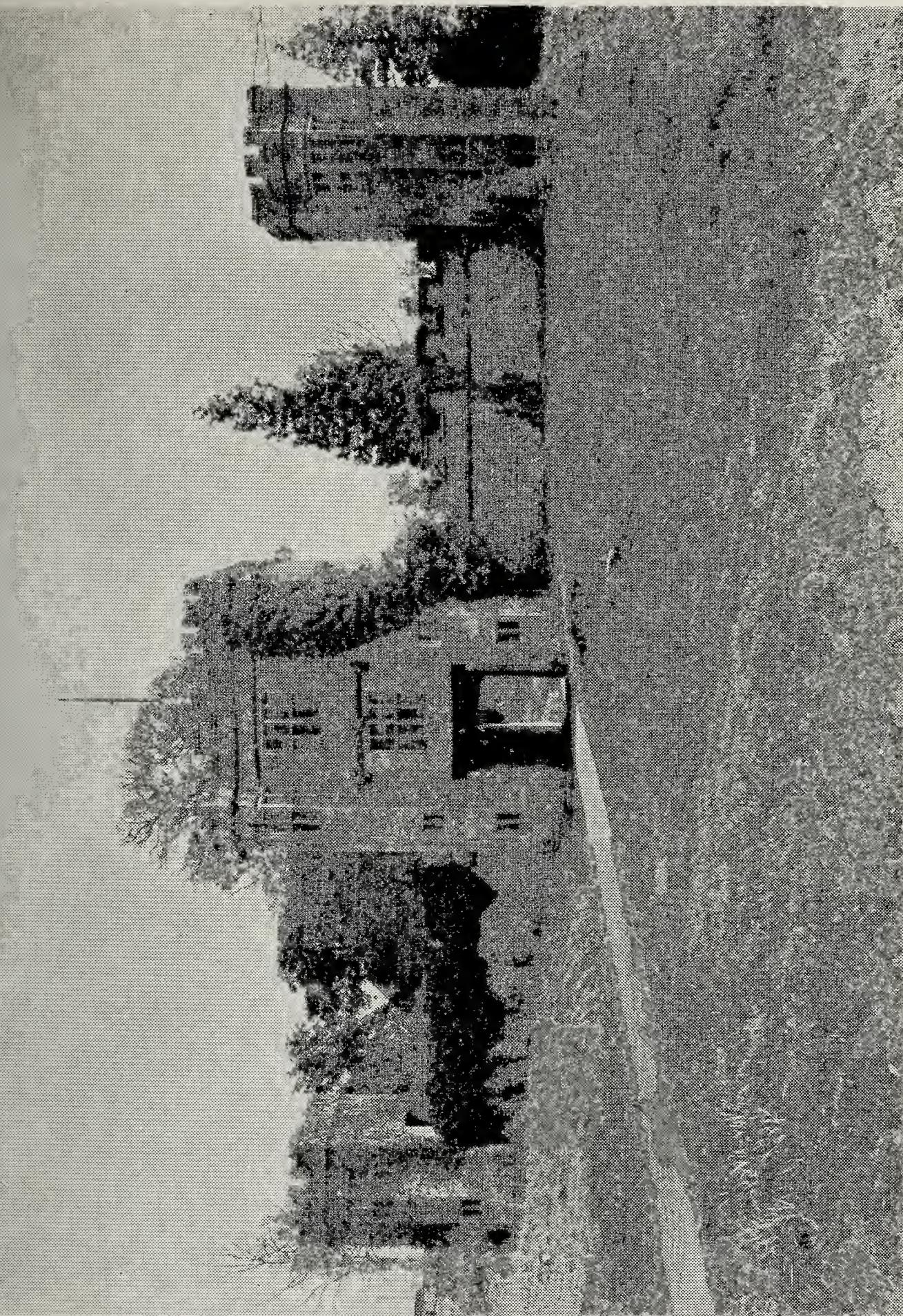
It is perhaps significant that although the Antiquary in his "Collections" clearly indicates the acquisition of Colcombe Castle and his subsequent building there, not at any point does he mention any building at Shute. Even one sentence among his vast tomes would have been a veritable godsend to historians.

It is highly probable that William, the father, was the one who erected the magnificent baronial gatehouse, in order to make an impressive approach to his newly-acquired mansion. From its general style, and the vigorous late Gothic sculpture, it seems that this must have been constructed during the early Elizabethan era, shortly after he had bought the place. The crenelations, gargoyle and mullioned windows obviously followed very much the same scheme and were intended to harmonize with the decoration on the beautiful square east tower, built in the time of Henry VII. The Pole heraldry adorns both the east and west faces of the gatehouse which opened into a large Elizabethan forecourt; at that time, this would, besides being fashionable, be a prime necessity, when vehicles were ponderous and unwieldy.

The little domicile over the gate has an upper and lower floor, with a large bright kitchen on the first, its mullioned windows with transoms facing both east and west, a wonderful coign of vantage for any interested spectator; above are two bedrooms. It is unlikely that there were terraces and wings, for

[By permission of "Country Life"]

THE GATEHOUSE. Elaborate gargoyles can be seen at the corners of the string course, also in the dripstone over the central window. A shield bearing the Pole Arms appears over the entrance, similar to the one on the inner side of the gateway. The gazebos do not seem to be of the same period as the gatehouse.



original windows in the sides are below the ground level of the terraces. The wings, therefore, belong to a later epoch, for early pictures depict the gazebos with gable roofs ; these looked quite out of place, and at some very much later period, possibly nineteenth century, were replaced by the existing little tower terminals to the walls, which harmonize better with the whole.

It is puzzling to know why such an unusually awkward site should have been chosen. Handsome as it is, the position gives rise to much speculation, for in those days without modern machinery, bull-dozers and excavators, the removal of large masses of earth was a major problem. Why was it placed so awkwardly at the edge of rising ground ? Did the great gateway originally have wings, terraces or gazebos ? If so, why were the big windows below the level of the terrace ? It is also difficult to visualize the original appearance before the demolition of part of the northern section in 1785. The building faces the tiny village and the lane which was formerly the drive, (as far as Shute pillars) leads to the road down to Colyton and in the other direction to the north and to Exeter. These, with many other queries can only be answered by speculation.

With regard to the western portion added to Cicely Bonville's mansion, it seems to be certain that this, at any rate, was the work of Sir William Pole, the son, and that mainly for domestic reasons. In spite of the great size of the manor house, more accommodation was demanded during the last decade of the sixteenth century for his rapidly growing and increasing family ; it must have been at that time that the mansion was further extended towards the west. The outside wall in the former west front (at present *inside* the extension) has mullioned windows,

now blocked up, at two levels ; moreover the roof over this section is at a different level.

At all events, among much that is controvertible, one convincing fact remains : the initials "W.P." are still to be seen cut in the stone of the spandrel of the entrance doorway to the octagonal turret in the west. The quaint old letters are ravaged by time and weather but form an indubitable proof that this extension to the house was added by Sir William Pole, and included the still existing turret bearing his name.

It is striking that although constructed at different periods by various architects, there is even now a sense of cohesion and unity in the external appearance which gives rise to questioning from various casual observers who usually assume that the whole place was built at one time, but subsequently altered.

The handsome single west turret seems to have a definite relationship with the great gateway opposite, having Tudor windows and other similarities, so it looks as if Sir William had been anxious to preserve the harmony for which his father also had striven.

We know for certain there was a porch, for in Courtenay Pole's Cash Book (Folio 46) in 1657 he mentions planting fourteen sycamores on the causey between the gatehouse and the porch on the west.

It can, therefore, be assumed that the porch was in the middle, flanked on either side by one of the octagonal towers.

It somehow seems almost impertinent to theorize about the lost section. The general appearance of the west front remains a complete mystery, baffling the experts who have examined closely all parts of the edifice.

In the Oratory, the interior changes may have been effected by Mr. Pole. The alteration and additional windows with cinque-foil lights in the northern

elevation might be ascribed to the father, but it is probably safer to conclude that they are the work of the Antiquary. The room may, of course, have been given a more secular use, for in recent years it has been called the Justices Room.

One other big alteration which may be ascribed to Sir William is the extension of the floor of the Chamber or Gallery in the old manor house situated above the Hall, in order to form a complete apartment. Such an extension was not without precedent, for similar works are recorded at much earlier dates, even in the reign of Henry III, but in the present case it cannot be confirmed. One stout ancient stone corbel table on the north wall supported the Gallery, which of course stretched from the east wall to the west, probably being separated into two or more rooms. Several other corbel tables of a later period are of modern deal; these seem to suggest that they are connected with the insertion of the intermediary floor two centuries later. The magnificent ceiling of the great Chamber was somewhat spoiled by the new floor, for it seems now too low for its great rafters and beams. When the new floor was interposed to complete the room, the light from the tall windows in the Hall below would be cut off, but three pairs of coupled sixteenth century windows on the west now give ample light.

The coupled trefoil and cinquefoil windows are inserted in wide splayed embrasures, which formed deep window sills; these in the fashion of the time, when furniture was not over-abundant, made useful seats. One can readily imagine my lady sitting here with her tapestry or "broidery," around her her maidens casting languishing eyes towards the hill coming up from "Colinton," or watching for the hunters cantering home from the Deer Park.

Anyhow, a large fine Chamber has been provided, very useful as a reception room or ballroom. In fact, the Chamber has been used for dances, within living memory of the villagers.

THE INTERMEDIARY FLOOR IN THE MANOR HOUSE.

Before leaving the Manor House, further alterations, made by the seventh Baronet at a much later date, might be recorded. That these were more important and more extensive than ordinary repair work, seems to have justified a large modern plaque being affixed to the west wall giving the date 1840. It seems fairly certain that the interposition of the intermediary floor was undertaken at that time, for no other significant changes appear to have been made during the nineteenth century. Sir William Templar Pole may have viewed with concern the old place, in which he had passed his own earliest years, lying neglected and inconvenient, particularly as he knew the pressing need for dwellings for farmers and workers on the estate. All the same it required considerable imagination and ingenuity to undertake the intricate task of introducing a useful modern mezzanine between the Hall below and the Chamber above. The floor of the Chamber had, as already described, been extended to make a large fine room. The lower apartment, Hall or Kitchen was extremely lofty, extending right up to the floor of the Chamber. Centuries before, the stout wall or screen had been erected on the edge of the dais ; this acting as a carrying wall was pressed into service as a powerful support for the new flat, and indeed facilitated the project considerably. The mezzanine was large enough to be divided into several pleasant good-sized bedrooms, approached by a rather awkwardly planned deal stair built on the dais behind the screen.

The actual construction of the floor and formation of the bedrooms was a less difficult task than the provision of adequate lighting arrangements for them. All these rooms are bright and well-lighted, so it seems, somehow, that Sir William had more respect for the needs of his tenants than for the building itself. Alas, the fine tall Gothic windows were blocked up and small heterogeneous openings made of all sizes and shapes. Although they give good internal illumination they have ruined the appearance of the exterior on both east and west.

Attention must be given to the hexagonal turret, significant part of the earliest structure. Originally it contained a small newel staircase, which was the sole means of reaching the Chamber from the Hall, and as in the fashion of the day was the means of communication for my lord and lady. At a later date the massive wall of the turret was pierced at the level of the mezzanine, giving an entrance to the flat and north rooms. It seems as if the opening may have been made at the same time as the Mezzanine, but this has not been proved.

Another reason for suggesting the nineteenth century for the mezzanine lies in the use of light constructional methods and modern building materials. Lath and plaster have been used to cover the ancient walls, and partitions of the same have been used in dividing the bedrooms. Modern deal has been used for the woodwork. The stair up from the dais is evidently contemporary, and the whole of this floor is in very much better condition than any other parts of the house.

From every point of view the mezzanine can claim to have been introduced at a very much later date than the last Jacobean work nearly 200 years earlier,

and can be confidently ascribed to the seventh Baronet, Sir William Templar Pole.

Most curious is it that not any vestige of initials, crest, or coat of arms survives from the time of the Lady Cicely ; her works can therefore not be confirmed by any evidence of that kind.

Alas, much has been ruined by the extraordinary number of small changes in the fabric and additions on the outside walls no less than in the interior. Doors and windows seem to have been opened up, altered, and blocked up again in every part of the edifice with just as little regard for the permanent style as would be exercised in changing the trimmings of a gown.

SIR WILLIAM POLE, Kt.

Born at Colyton 1614.

Married Grace (died 1639) daughter of Sir Thomas Trenchard of Wolverton.

Died January, 1648. Buried in Colyton Church.

William, the eldest son, died before his father, so did not inherit the Baronetcy, but used the courtesy title as the son of a Baronet. He was, like all the Poles, an ardent Royalist, a daring and adventurous soldier ; he is specially mentioned as having been with King Charles I at the siege of York during the early days of the Civil War.

It was he who made his home at Colcombe Castle, the fine house that his grandfather had built. Alas, it was while he was living there in 1642, only seven years after the death of the Antiquary, that the famous mansion was finally and irretrievably destroyed by the Parliamentarians during the Civil War. It is sad to see the ruins of the house that the old man had re-built with such enthusiasm, but far greater was the tragedy, that a great part of his laboriously-produced

and invaluable history should have been completely destroyed.

As mentioned earlier, Sir John, the first Baronet, evidently inherited the historical and family interests, so it is not surprising to find his son, William, undertaking a vast work, *A Baronage of England*. This huge tome, bound in stout leather, begins with a long dedication to his father, Sir John Pole, then still living, couched in charmingly affectionate and filial language. The actual calligraphy is excellent, small, neat and clear, though naturally brown with age. A great many genealogies of lordly families have been studied and entered in the book, but his monumental work was never completed.

One would like to have known more of this young knight and soldier, evidently a student, serious and well-trained but happily a flash illuminates his personality more intimately. A small brown calf-bound notebook has survived, with the initials W.P. in gold on the cover. On the fly-leaf is written :

Wm. Pole
Bought in Exeter 1644
price 1s. 4d.

The book was apparently not used till later, for further on it is stated :

“ Briefe Heads of Collections out of some books
read, beginning ye 5th day of January, 1647.”

The first synopsis is of the “ History of Mahomet in small octavo, written by Sir Walter Raleigh.” Then follows a long history of “ Lowis XIV ” in several sections, each dated as if the *résumé* had been made as the reader had finished a chapter. The abstracts are well proportioned and well expressed. The writing is exceptionally clear and good, much

better than that of his brother Courtenay in both style and spelling.

This Sir William erected a canopy with a tender poetic inscription in Latin to his own mother in Colyton Church, and a tablet to his wife and their two little sons, the “children’s children’s children” of the Antiquary.

SIR JOHN POLE, FIRST BARONET.

Born 1588.

Married Elizabeth (died 1628) only daughter and heiress of Jane (his stepmother) and Roger How.

Died, April, 1658. Buried in Colyton Church.

Sir John Pole was the second son of the Antiquary. He was the distinguished, though not remarkable, son of his remarkable father. In the original MSS of the Antiquary’s “Collections” there are various notes and interpolations evidently of a later day and in another hand, some of which it is believed were made by Sir John, who was known to be interested in the history of the county. Without careful examination of the additions in the light of contemporary history it would not be possible to verify these. Some notes are attributed also to John Prince in 1697, but this copyist has been careful to distinguish his own additions. A rich and interesting field of research lies open to an enquirer with time at his disposal.

For many years Sir John was Member of Parliament for Devonshire, and lived in London for long periods.

When he was created a Baronet by Charles I in 1628 an unusual situation arose with regard to his father, who had been made a knight in the previous reign. James I had founded the Order of Baronets in 1611 for the express purpose of raising money for the Crown, more particularly for the plantations in

Ulster. Yonge says that £100,000 was raised by this embarrassing procedure. The members of this Order were to take precedence over Knights. Only those were eligible for the Order, whose paternal grandfathers had borne arms and whose landed estates were worth more than £1,000. As Sir John had recently inherited the large estates of his mother's family (the Hows of Crediton) the latter condition was fulfilled, but history does not record that either grandfather had ever borne arms. As Sir John was, however, a useful and eminent citizen, the difficulty raised by this anomalous position was apparently overcome, and he became the first Baronet of the Pole family. Sir John bore on his coat of arms a canton showing the red hand of Ulster, as do his descendants to this day.

One privilege of the newly-created baronet at that time was that his eldest son should be knighted on coming of age. This caused some confusion in this family, as doubtless in others, for Sir John's eldest son William, who died during the lifetime of his father, was a knight; the second son, Sir Courtenay, was not knighted but in due course became the second Baronet.

Sir John lived through anxious times, during the later days of Charles I, and the Civil Wars. The Poles being always staunch Royalists, the position may have been perilous while some of its members were away fighting for the King.

The Historical MS Commission's records include a pertinent letter from Sir John to the Mayor of Exeter :

“ I did send you a surtificate under Sir John Bartley's (Berkeleys) to testify I was a Commander under him during his government in your Cittie.”

ALTERATIONS DURING THE TIME OF SIR JOHN POLE, FIRST BARONET.

About the time that the Parliamentarian forces destroyed Colcombe Castle a fire broke out in Shute House ; there is no evidence to prove that this was due to enemy action. Obviously, the fire was not serious or extensive, for no damage can be proved to have been done to the outer fabric. The beams of the wonderful trussed and braced ceiling of the Chamber still bear marks of charring, so either the damage was slight or it has long since been repaired. At any rate there was probably sufficient harm done to cause Sir John to consider some renovations and additions. It is difficult at this distance of time to disentangle the sequences, in view of new doors, and built up doors and windows, etc., modern decoration and overlaying.

The works of Sir John, are, however, mainly interior decoration, probably of this period. The large sunny Solar within the handsome square tower on the east front was brightened and enriched by lining the entire walls as well as the interior of the square turret with fine Jacobean panelling and delicate moulding. This handsome room with its fine fireplace served as a bedroom at some later period, however, for it contains a huge wooden wardrobe painted white and ornamented with strap work ; however, as this piece of furniture is not a fixture, it may have been brought into the room at any date. Sir John was probably responsible for altering the window frames and inserting the new sash windows ; these were following a modern fashion only appearing in London about the middle of the seventeenth century. These frames were in the form of a double sash each divided by three vertical and two horizontal bars. The new windows may have been put in by his son,

the practical Courtenay, for use rather than decoration, but on the whole it seems more probable that Sir John brought the idea from London. It is significant that if a room as fine as this was used as a bedroom, there were plenty of others equally handsome as living-rooms. From this we can infer that the northern wing also contained fine reception rooms, probably extensions of the then existent apartments on the north. Another room which shows evidences of Sir John's interest is the little "Oratory" over the south gate. During the time of the Antiquary it appears to have been given a more secular use, and turned into a comfortable little sanctum or study.

The sanctum still keeps its fine ceiling and an attractive quatrefoil opening in the west wall. A fireplace has been added, opening into a tall red-brick chimney. The surround of the fireplace, panelled and painted white, in much the same manner as that of the Solar, can probably be attributed also to Sir John. Perhaps in later days this was where Sir John's son, Courtenay, transacted business or did his accounts, for he seems to have been the business man of the family; moreover he spent nearly all his life at Shute. He may have used this also as his Library for it is known that for a private collector he had accumulated a goodly number of books, many of which survived and were eventually transferred to the Shute House Library, and are now at Antony House.

Sir John Pole and his lady lie buried in Colyton Church, where a magnificent and highly decorative Corinthian canopy is erected over the life-size effigies. The figures lie on their sides, back to back, the knight in full armour, and the lady in cap and farthingale.

CHAPTER VII

COURTENAY POLE AND HIS CASH ACCOUNTS

SIR COURTENAY POLE, SECOND Bt.

Baptised Colyton, February 17th, 1618.

Married Urith Shapcote (died 1673).

Died April, 1695.

His father's name is given at the baptism as Sir John Pole, of Colcombe, first Baronet, but shortly after the birth of Courtenay, his father and family moved up to Shute which Courtenay was to occupy for almost the whole of his life.

The quite unusual name Courtenay, in a family where John and William chase each other to confusion, came through the famous family of the Earls of Devon, one of whom, Francis Courtenay, married Mary, seventh daughter of the Antiquary, in Shute Church, November, 1606, at a period when relations between the two families had become more amicable than in the Bonville days.

Not being the eldest son, Courtenay was not brought up as the heir, but seems to have had a house in Exeter, as several of his elder children were born there. After the death of his elder brother, William, the heir, he continued to look after the house and manage or overlook the estates, and to carry on the normal occupations of which he has left us a vivid description in his account books.

Sir Courtenay seems to emerge from the past as one of the most of the inhabitants of the mansion, over the centuries ; this is partly due to the impression drawn from the quaint old cash book, of which more anon, and partly because there are still in existence

two portraits of him. They hang on the walls at Antony House among numerous ancestors and descendants. The earlier painting shows an eager, vivacious-looking youth of the period of Charles I with a mass of fuzzy hair ; the other shows an older man, still with thick curls of (apparently) his own hair, calm, confident and mature. Sir Courtenay is mentioned as a “particularly genial man,” an impression which is hardly confirmed by his portraits ; moreover, on the contrary, his little cash book indicates a plain, austere man, exact and shrewd, not bothering much about charm or niceties.

After the death of his father, Sir Courtenay was sometime Member of Parliament for Honiton, and was certainly in the Cavalier or Pensionary Parliament. This, first elected May, 1661, was not finally dissolved for eight years ; but he continued to represent Honiton altogether for seventeen years. A letter still to be seen bears the direction :

“For Sir Courtenay Pole, Barrownet, at ye Parliament house of Westminster, being a member of ye Honourable House of Comones, London. I pray with care.”

Though overshadowed by his illustrious grandfather, the Antiquary, he was a distinguished Devonian.

It is said that, at the time of the Restoration, ardent Royalists, anxious to show their fidelity, bought or commissioned paintings of Charles II, so that a number of these portraits are still to be found among the great houses of England. Sir Courtenay would give points to no one in loyalty ; he had, moreover, a keen eye for a bargain, so he purchased for his home a fine portrait of the dark-haired monarch. For this he is reputed to have paid £5. It hung for over 120 years on the grand staircase of the new Shute

House, when a visitor chanced to notice that it was by Lely.

Another shopping story tells how one of his little daughters asked her father, when he was going to London, if he would bring her back a "silver warming-pan." It is pleasant to think that this may have been Anne, one of the youngest. There is no doubt that an efficient warming-pan would be a prime necessity in that great unheated house, but even so something less extravagant might have served the purpose equally well. However, she had probably read of some grand lady using a silver one and had coveted it. Anyhow the generous and indulgent fairy godfather, remembering her wish on his next visit to London, brought her back the elegant chattel, but he paid dearly for his promise. It cost him £25, a goodly sum in those days for a girlish whim.

Sir Courtenay was evidently a good deal concerned with the well-being of his young sisters during the long absences of their father, so one can feel that he was quite relieved to hand over three of them to their respective husbands. By the time that Jane, the youngest, was off his hands his own little brood, two sons and four daughters, were filling the old house with merriment.

His eldest sister, Martha, certainly felt a special affection for him. Martha (Mrs. Everie) was born and married at Shute, and her own little daughter Grace was also born in the house. From the notes in Courtenay's cash book, they must have stayed there from time to time, and she invited "my syster Jane" to visit her home also. Evidently Martha "my syster Everie" and Courtenay were good friends. The Record of Somerset Wills, gives that of Martha Pole, widow of William Everie of Cothay, Somerset, dated 26.xi.1673. Among the legacies, she left to her

syster Elizabeth a ring of 20/, to her syster Jane also a ring of 20/-, but to her brother Sir Courtenay Pole, she left £200.

It was this lady, "my syster Everie," whose name appears frequently in Courtenay's cash book as having purchased articles of clothing for "my syster Jane," against her marriage. The insatiable "my syster Jane" the baby of the family was much younger than Courtenay.

There is an attractive portrait at Antony House labelled "Mifs. Pole"; it depicts a chubby little girl of about seven years of age with a coy expression; she appears to be offering a shell (sic) to an enormous grey parrot. She is attired in elegant classical draperies so the costume is quite dateless; it is not known which of the many little Pole girls is represented, but it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that "my syster Jane" is portrayed. One likes to think so.

It is to be regretted that Sir Courtenay never mentions his wife or children in his accounts; it is not unnatural, since he had of course no call to keep any account of *their* "diet." It would have been illuminating to read some of his letters to them from the "Parliament house." Three long business letters of Courtenay's over some small matter are still to be seen, and may be read with difficulty. The arguments he had put forward are logical, but patient and ponderous.

Sir Courtenay survived to a ripe old age, nearly ninety years, having lived through the horrors of Civil War, down to the peaceful days of William and Mary. His children included another Courtenay who was born in Exeter, and Penelope who married Francis Robartes, second son of the Earl of Radnor, a politician and distinguished musician; she was

buried under the pavement of the aisle in Shute Church. At this date one cannot say why she should lie here far from her home near Saltash, but, whatever the reason, it shows her love of Shute and of her brother Courtenay. When his wife Urith (Shapcote) died in 1673, Courtenay had a handsome stained-glass window placed in the North Aisle of Shute Church, showing various escutcheons, including the Pole impaling Shapcote. The sweet name of Urith is not recorded among Courtenay's own children, but a little Urith, a grandchild, was born shortly after the death of his wife.

Sir Courtenay was buried at Shute but his memorial lingers on.

SIR COURtenay POLE, SECOND BARONET.

CASH ACCOUNTS FROM 1650 TO 1658.

Most fortunately some of the note books of Sir Courtenay have survived, and were preserved by his kinsman, Sir Frederick de la Pole, eleventh Baronet, in whose neat Italianate hand the above label is inscribed on the cover. The particular book which we have had the good fortune to study, was offered with many other books at the sale of Furniture and Effects at Shute House in 1927, and is now in the possession of a resident of Colyton. This is a small thick volume, bound in tooled brown leather now somewhat the worse for wear. The paper and ink are brown and faded but the words are still remarkably clear. At first sight the handwriting appears to be no more than hieroglyphics, but with patience and a strong magnifying glass, a good deal of it has proved to be decipherable. The actual formation of most of the letters conforms closely to those given in the Report on the Publication of Parish Registers issued

1626

Visitation B: A.C. 13:

2. Mallow my self for my self
as fam'd Dist with him a off of a year 32 00 00
and at Christams

The Entertainment of Mr. Crocker
burn 3 days & last on lime & lib man
and two or 3 days and a few more &
by 2nd him Bib 28 & other burn with him
of other items a Trooper in the Chinnery 32 00 00
Trooper of Culpeper a Wood on Rib
Entertainment and the Bay Oak ² 23
and with reason demand in more 4 Run my
own Account in wood & Ran my Account
also unto 3, of that in my Boarding

Balance of all my self what you were
28. Paid to 90 Promiss more at Christams 40 00 00

by the Archaeological Congress, and are more Germanic in appearance than the Court hand of an earlier period. The actual calligraphy is not nearly so good or clear as that of the Antiquary, his grandfather, but it shows character and consistency. The spelling is individual, "according to the taste and fancy of the speller, M'lud," but here again the scribe sticks to his own version. In some of the pages in 1657-8 the writing deteriorates to a marked degree, and is careless and slovenly but the figures in every case are surprisingly clear and legible, and the margins and cash columns carefully ruled in pencil.

Half a page is reproduced from page 131; it is one of the neatest entries, a fascinating scrap to decipher.

The accounts are put down fairly clearly, and seem to have been kept regularly, but the system is involved. The writer appears to have allotted a certain number of pages each year to the Receipts, and the same to Disbursements. So far these are straightforward, but where the number of pages was insufficient for one section or other he has turned the book upside down and continued among some deleted items. The actual sequence therefore is complicated. Moreover, the record is more like that of a Day Book where everything is entered as it occurs. It has, therefore, seemed clearer in the latter part of this commentary to classify the entries, with as nearly as possible the dates; generally speaking, the period is not so noteworthy as the price. Many items are entered twice in identical words, though the first has not always been erased. Scratching out is frequent. The book quite definitely shows only the rough notes of the transactions, with frequent repetitions, and lines or even whole sections roughly crossed out. Here and there a pointed index finger directs the reader

to some special entry, and sometimes he makes a "MEM" for the same purpose.

Although there are a few memoranda for the earlier years, the accounts are only complete after 1653. An important (for the reader) minute runs :

" September the 8th, 1653.

This present day I have cast up all my Accompts of what I have receaved, as also of what I have disburst, and what money I have retorneed ; this from the latter end of november 1650, unto this 8th of September 1653 ; in which John Abbott did help me and have again written them all into a Larger Booke bound with parchment.

The Totall of the Receipts.....	4711..14.. 8
My Disbursements	275..05..10
The Receipts Retorneed	4326..13.. 6
There resteth in my hands this present day due to my ffather Sir John Pole....	0109.. 5.. 4 "

Generally, Receipts and Disbursements have been kept in their separate sections and balanced up at the end of the year :

" *Accomptes for the year 1654*

The totall of my Receipts are.....	934..11..03
Disbursements	953.. 7.. 7
My ffather then oweth me upon this Accompte, march 24th, 1654....	18..16.. 4 "

In writing of his father, or in Proper Names, Courtenay always uses " ff " for a capital " F " as in Court-hand manuscript. He uses curious little tricks in the writing ; the indefinite article for instance always carries a French acute accent ; the long " S " is always used, both in the middle of a word and at the end, except in plurals. He usually, but not invariably, inserts the " O " in the tens place in sums of money. Nearly always he uses " U " for " V " e.g., " gloues."

It seems odd that, considering the high value of small coins in that era, not one single reference to a half-penny appears anywhere. That ha'pence were in use in the village is certain, for, in digging the foundations for a tennis court at Shute in 1939 an Irish halfpenny of Charles II was found ; it lay about 4 feet below the ground near a footpath between the house and the village of Whitford.

The sole purpose of the account book was to render to his father an account of his stewardship. Sir John Pole was absent in London for long periods, in fact, during the whole period 1650-58 there is nothing in the accounts to indicate that he ever came down to Shute. He had long been a widower, though he is known to have married again, in London. He was probably engaged on his Parliamentary duties, but he had obviously other business there, for his address is given in different places. Courtenay writes to him :

“ Sir John Pole at the Bunch of Grapes in Cheap Side,” or to “ Sir John Pole in Abchurch Lane,” and on various occasions he notes,

“ I delivered my Accompte to my ffather at Bromely.”

When his daughter, “ my syster Jane ” was married at Shute, the entry in the Church Register gave her as the “ daughter of Sir John Pole of Bromelay St. Leonards, Middlesex.”

Courtenay seems to have travelled to London from time to time to discuss matters with his father, or, a more important task, to take money to him. In fact, the fly-leaf of the little book is headed :

“ London, Julie 1st, 1654.”

Again, he writes :

“ My last Accompte I paste in London at my being there the 20th of februarie 1653.”

In September, 1655, he mentions . . . "when I left you."

Sep., 1657. "Money delivered to my syster Jane when I went to London."

The entries in the cash book are mainly receipts for rents, fines, etc. ; while the outgoings record payments in respect of the properties, both at Shute and in various parts of the county, including Exeter, Widecombe, Broadwisor, etc., as well as allowances for his sisters', and his own personal travelling expenses, incurred on his father's behalf. The impression the story gives, is that of a serious hard-working, careful employee rather than that of a son and heir. It may have been the spirit of the age, but he is unquestioningly obedient and dependent in awaiting instructions given, in quite trivial matters, and apologetically referring to actions undertaken without parental direction. He writes :

" My expenses when I went to Coleton in november being there and staying there for a ffortnight with my wife to provide in the Riote made by holmes etc. it being so long till I receaved your instructions."

Again in April 1654 :

" I put not to Accompte aniething before because it was in my Grandmother's Life though it was at my charge, and I was bid by my Grandmother to put it to your Accompt, but I could not (shift ?) to beare it then. She was with me before her death, but if you please to allow for it ; it is from August the 6th to Christmas . . . £8...15...0"

(This evidently referred to the step-grandmother Jane How who died in January, 1653.)

His own salary or wage of £40 a year is always accounted for in a matter-of-fact way, just as that of the other retainers :

“ Due to my Allhollentide qt
november ist 10... 0... 0 ”

Again :

“ Due to me Candlemas qt feb.
2nd 1652 10... 0... 0
My Annuitie Roodmas 1653 ... 10... 0... 0 ”

He was “ passing rich on £40 a year,” although his father was a comparatively wealthy man and Courtenay his heir. Of course one cannot even speculate on how much of the “ diet ” for himself and family was gratuitous. Evidently he was feeling the need for prompt repayment of sums laid out, for, at the end of the year 1654, having cast up the Accompts the writer concludes : “ The Retornes then are 620...0...0 ”

He continues :

“ more then is due to me upon another Accompt ;
now also delivered you for Interest at Christmas
last *which money I have taken to supplie my necessities*
204...8...4.”

But things were apparently improving, or perhaps Sir John realized that by now Courtenay had six young children growing up, for it is recorded :

Sept. 29th, 1655.

“ Allowed myselfe according to yr order
when I left you ; for one qt of a yeares
allowance for the interest of my money
in yr hands, and what you are pleased
to ad to it due this 29th of September,
Michaelmas day 40... 0... 0 ”

Sep. 25th, 1656.

“ Allowed myselfe what you were
pleased to promise more at Christmas 40... 0... 0 ”

The *Receipts* cover a great variety of payments of which the smallest number were rent settlements, without qualification. These were apparently collected by agents in different places, and the total handed to Courtenay :

" 1650.

Jan. 28	Rec. of Mr. Cutler	50
,, 28	Rec. of Mr. John Clarke ..	124..15.. 0
	John ffrake	50
	John Loveridge	80 "
	etc.	

But some tenants evidently paid him direct:

" Receaved of George Oke his qts Rent due Rooodemas, May 1653	11.. 6.. 0 "
" Aug. 16 Receaved of Richard Smer- don in Exon/ August 16, Widecombe Rent in money	£9.. 9.. 6
Allowed him in Rates	0..18.. 0 "
" Aug. 18 Receaved of Richard Pape of Nutorr for Rent, allowing him Rates 2.. 9	1.. 7.. 0 "

Unfortunately very few records state the period for which the rent was due.

Low as the rentals appear to be, the tenants evidently found difficulty in paying up regularly, and in numerous cases arrears and fines are collected and paid up, and in a number of instances the money was "brought by the bayliffe."

" Receaved of Mr. Edw. fforde which he had at Templeton at that head rent, brought of Henrie (?) the bayliffe....	12.. 0.. 0 "
" Receaved of Starke ... for Composition of his Arreares	10.. 0.. 0 "
" Nov. 5th, 1656	
" Receaved of doctor hoph the last of his ffine having made 2 paiments before (Apparently the same doctor hoph who had attended ' my syster Jane ' in her sickness, earlier in that year.)	50.. 0.. 0 "
" May 1654. Spent at the Courte keeping at Peberstone at the consulting with the Tenants for their Arreares, and, at the same time at Coleton about the ham with Sr John Younger	00..10.. 0 "
(Could we but know the story of that ham!)	

“ For a writ and warrant against Christopher Trump of Peberstone ..	o... 8.. 1 ”
“ Receaved of Phillip Nosworthie this 29th of october the last half of his ffine for the Barton Tenement in Widecombe ; the other receaved ffeb before	35.. o.. o ”
“ Receaved this same September 29th of Edmond Piper of Coleford the first part of his ffine for the greate Riding in Coleford meade the some of thirtie nine poundes, the Residue being fifteen pounds is due the 1st of September next	39.. o.. o ”

There is evidence of his firmness in collecting these sums of money, but obviously “ no shadow of turning ” in carrying out the task. Even in the cruel matter of herriots, the claims are made without consideration. The ancient feudal service had of course changed, but at this date the best live beast, or live or dead chattel of a deceased tenant, was due by legal custom to the lord of whom he held. Although this has changed now it must have been a heavy charge on a poor tenant.

There are several records of the collection of herriots :

Aug. 6th 1656

“ Receaved from Rich. Smerdon for Widecombe heade Rent this 6 of August	08..00..00 ”
“ Receaved from him also an herriot mare a Little moon (?) thing Lame, pd for the wid Arnels death ; This man lost money in the Curing, when shee is disposed I shall accompte for her if I receave the money but shee (?) the mare) is now in Will Searle keeping.”	

(In another document Courtenay mentions “William Searle our old servant for fifty years, is now blind.”)

“ Oct. 15th 1657	
“ Receaved of henerie Coz of Wid- worthie the younger, the sum of sixteen poundes being the last payment of his ffine for a Tenement solde by John ffrake by yr order in his life time	16..00..00 ”
“ Receaved of him also the same day for an herriot upon henerie Bonds Onti- melie death a while since by the fall of a greate stone burning of lime.”.....	00..13.. 0
“ Receaved of Sam Paule for a herriot due upon the death of his ffather.....	3..16.. 8 ”
“ Receaved of Rich. ? bicciarde the whole of his fine for the burnt house	2..00..00 ”

Definite headings seem clearer for the following groups of entries :

BANKING.

As there was then no regular banking system, the collection and transfer of money was a more complicated and dangerous matter than can possibly be comprehended in modern times. Large sums seem to be set up against expected expenses, some are sent to London as Bills, and some apparently held by intermediaries on deposit receipt till required. The intricate exchanges are shown in the following entries :

“ feb. 23, 1655. Receaved from William
Searle one hundred pounds which I
sent to Exeter the same day and
retorned it by bill date the 25 payable
at 12 daies sighte from Mr Hermon . . .
Mr Nathaniell Potter at the Bunch of
Grapes in Cheapside ” £100.. 0.. 0 ”

(Mr. Hermon and Mr. Potter seem to have taken part in many of these transactions.)

" Sept 26th 1657

Retorned five hundred poundes by bill date Exon Sept 19th to be paid the 16th october by Mr hennerie Hirk-forde, merchant in Soper Lane, London unto Sr John Pole. The Bill from Mr (? Nie) Exeleigh of Exeter, but Mr Antonie undertakes for both. The money to be paid unto Mr Carew.... £500.00.00 "

Even sending money to Honiton, Exeter or Chard had to be done by messenger and horse.

" 1653. Sending money to Exeter.... 00.02.0 "

" Nov. 1st. The higher of a horse to carrie money 00.02.06 "

" feb. 20th 1653

Receaved of Will Searle by John my man 200.00.00

The Rest being 2.9.6 was returned by Mr George Shapcotes order from Mr Thomas Crispin upon Mr William Beale at Mr ? Orks house near St. Panclius (? Pancras) Church in London. The bill bearing date march the 3rd to be pd at 8 daies sight."

" . . . This money sent this sam day to Exeter by my man and is returned on Mr daniel ffarington in St Nicholas lane near Lumber Streete."

ESTATE WORK.

" Thatching for Tyrlings house : half a hundred of Reede 12.00

Paid the thatcher and his man about Tyrlings house. 3 daies 6.00 "

" Pd humph mogrige for cleansing, draining, cutting, marling fencing plowing and soeing a little more belonging to Slade, to bring it from less than 10 aks to a greate vallue to be a meadow to you hereafter the Corne and the Successe which I doubt not will answer reputation 8.00.0 "

" November 1657

Pd ffor Rooting of ashes and carriage
from Bovey and setting them up
against Shute Hill, as also for rooting
70 elmes and setting them into a large
walke in greate hill in pond close
towards Rooke Woode 05.18.0"

An interesting note concerns the rooting and carrying of trees. He pays for the fifty or sixty Birch-trees from Grinham, and at the same time gets eighty-six Siccamores at Yeartie (? Yarty) and settles them at Shute.

Another item sheds a gleam of light on the mysterious Mansion: Fifty-nine trees and fourteen between the gatehouse and the porch on each side of the Causey. This seems to confirm that the Porch of the Tudor Mansion was opposite the gatehouse at that time, and that apparently a short avenue stretched from one to the other. A "Causey" was usually a wide ridge above the level of the adjacent verges. No sign of the avenue or of the Causey survives.

" ffor Spurles horse leaping ye two bay mares and the olde white mare and a messenger 3 times going with them..	1.10.0"
" Pd my Cos Walrond for rooting one hundred of Ashes for Shute Hill....	0.5.0"
" Pd a man for carrying them from Bovey to Shute Hill upon our own horses ..	0.4.0"
" Pd for the 3 horse meate at Exeter 3 nights when they went to Mr Carew and retorneid again with the money..	00.06.00
Mens expenses	3.00."
" Januarie 22nd 1654	
Receaved of my ffather Shapcote for the Little bay nag.....	5.10.0"
(Ureth Shapcote was Courtenay's wife.)	
" Pd for riding the young grey mare now five yeares old, and for shewing her to rid, and for her meate whilst riding."	

POSTS AND LETTERS.

“ Julie 1655. 2 post Lettors from honiton 1..00

“ Sept. 1656 Postige of severall Lettors westwards about (? hele Godier), and other businesse and bringing Lettors from honiton and *twice to London concerning my syster.*

(As this was the same week that “ my Syster Jane ” saw her “ phisition ” it seems as if she must have been really ill, or at least sick enough for it to have been necessary to send reports to London to her father.)

“ ffor sending Lettors and pd for Lettors brought from honiton severall times.. 0.. 5.. 0 ”

“ JOURNIES.”

“ My journie to Exeter octob 7th to meete Mr. Crocker and to pay him money 01..10..00 ”

(Enter Mr. Crocker, of whom more anon).

“ April 1656. My Expenses at Exeter in the Assise-weeke in following yr businesses 1.. 1.. 9 ”

“ Nov. 1657

Both at Exeter and Chudleigh I was out 11 daies about the severall businesses.. 1..18.. 0

Pd Mr Cabel . . . in presence of my brother Southcott at Chudleigh.....

My ffather Shapcotes Servant my own expenses severall times at Coleton ; and presented some bottles of wine to Sir Peter Prideaux

5..01..00 ”

“ 1656

My Journie to Linum at the ending of the businesse, hay oates and Expenses....

1..00..00 ”

(Lyneham Manor was the home of the Crocker family, so it is possible that the "businesse" was not unconnected with the forthcoming betrothal of "my syster Jane.")

CHURCH OR TITHES.

At the beginning of the book is a memorandum :

" The tith of corne of Coleton and Shute
anno. 1638.

wheate	ackers.....	576 at 5d	144
Barley	ackers	350 at 4d	070
Oates	ackers	459 at 2d	095..18
nothing accompted for pease and beanies.			
Grasse		573 at 1s..6	046.. 0.. 6

" April 1656

To a rate for the Repairs of St David's
Church (probably Exeter)

01..10..00 "

" Sept. 29th 1656

Pd to Mr haytor the Schoolmaster of the
high schoole in Exon by order of
maior John hale out of the tith rent due
now : the order under his hand.....

2..17.. 4 "

" Pd Mr Lewes Stukeley minnister by
maior hales appointment out of the
tith Rent due now, under his hand....

50..00..00 "

" Aug. 1656

Receaved of the Parrish of Shute which
you laide out for them about their
minnister

10.. 0.. 0 "

" Novb. 12th

Receaved of Rob hill for halfe a yeares
Rent for the barton of peberstone,
whereof 80..14..5 in money, and
allowed to the (? Armir) highway,
Church

80..14.. 5

Reparation and pore Rate 3..5..7. So
in money onlie Rests due 22..14..2
which Rob. hill must collect.

(This is the only time that the highway and Church Reparation and the 'pore Rate' have been mentioned, although "Rates" occur frequently.)

" Aug. 1657

Retorned you the beginning of August by
a bill from Mr John Gill minnister of
Shute, which money was his 3 quarters
Augmentation pd by Mr Steele 22..10.. 0 "

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS.

These details indicate the kind of routine expenditure on all manner of day to day expenses, which the conscientious Courtenay settled.

" Januarie 1653

ffor 2 greate cheeses weiging 48 poundes 0..16.. c
ffor a box to Carrie them 0.. 2.. 4
The carriage of the box to honiton.

" My Expenses when at Coleton plucking
up Holmes were: I went thither
munday; It was ffryday before wee
could get it to be done.....

1.. 2.. 0

My Expenses (at Coleton) were: In
some entirtainment besides my own
charge made to Justice Drake and
Justice (? Putt) at my own house both
supping there and Put lying there, and
both dining there once

2.. 1.. c

Pd to my Brother Shapcott by yr order
for ingrossing et the partition of
Sampson's Land.....

0..15.. 0

Pd the horse Rider for the greate Gelding
To Mrs fflayes maide looking to yr
clothes. Corde and carriage of them
to Coleton

0.. 3.. 6

The higher of a horse to carrie money..

0.. 2.. 6

My ffather laide out for a (? musguett)
and the appurtenances, and for a
Picture case for his picture.....

2.. 8.. 0

Pd for the carriage of the sweetmeate
Boxes from London: Loring the
waggoner; I was formerlie directed by
letter to accompt it to you.....

0.. 9.. 4 "

Two Young Emigrants. About Ladie Day, 1658.

The names of the two young emigrants are not given and there are no details apart from their outfit and journey monies. As these expenses are charged up to his father, evidently Sir Courtenay was only acting under instructions. It is not stated to what part of "Nu England" they were dispatched, but it is comforting to assume that they went to Taunton, Massachusetts, to Sir John's brother William, who was reputed to be a revered and pious school-master, and the registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths there. His intrepid sister, Elizabeth, had died, but William was known to have stayed in Taunton till 1664, though later he moved to Dorchester, Massachusetts.

The entries run :

" Given the two boyes I sent for Nu England, to each 1s. 6d.	00..03..00
Pd the Carrier waggoner that carried the 2 boyes to London: Loring at Axminster 20s and 1d. to drink.....	01..0..10
15s more he is to have in London.	
ffor 5 yards and qt of very course cloth to make them 2 sutes	00..15..9
ffor the inside and making them	00..13..00
ffor 2 pr of storkins	00..02..03
ffor 2 pr of shues	00..03..10
ffor 2 hats	00..02..08
ffor 4 shirts for them	00..08..00
Pd the boyes master bill to pt with the redheaded boy	00..10..00 "

(The last note may have had something to do with his apprenticeship. It would be interesting to know how the boys fared.)

FAMILY.

It is curious that there are so many financial transactions between Courtenay's father and the

various members of the family, but they are all kept and recorded as faithfully as they are for tenants or employees. The Shapcotes seem to have lived near and "my ffather Shapcote" and "my Brother Phillip" (Shapcote) were apparently useful in all manner of jobs.

" 1651

Rec. of my Aunt Pole, Talliton. Arreares 76..00..00

This is not the end of her for she has to
pay out more."

" July 24th 1653

Receaved of my Syster Everie, which may
ffather laide out for her daughter....

9..08.. 3 "

(Mrs. Everie of Cothay, Somerset, was his sister Martha; her daughter Grace who was born at Shute, would at that time be about twenty years of age.)

" Sept. 8th 1653

Pd by yr order to my Grandmother at the
end of all differences.....

21..10.. 0

Pd by yr Appointment to my Grand-
mother some arrears of her annuities
at the ending of the differences.....

66..00..00

" March 30th 1654

Receaved of my syster Everie which my
ffather laide out for her in London for
steriped stufte.....

5..18..00 "

" Oct. 24th 1654

Receaved of my Cosen Katherine South-
cote of (?) India, money which my
ffather pd for her in London, but my
ffather writ it should be 63..12..0 ..
If so, then yet due from her 6..14..0 "

56..18.. 0

(There speaks the responsible steward.)

" Receaved from Aunt Pole of Talliton,
whereof lost by bad money of that
some at Widecombe.....

79..11..00

Returned of this to London 50..00..00

The Remande in my hand

more 6..13.. 6 "

MY SYSTER JANE.

Perhaps the most human and certainly the most entertaining are the entries with regard to "my syster Jane," who must often have been a clamant young lady. The youngest member of the family, and probably the spoiled darling, Jane undoubtedly was rather a troublesome jade to the hardworking Courtenay. The clothing worn by a young lady of good family, and the prices paid in that century, are enlightened by the entries. The account of her demands in this account book begins in Januarie, 1654 and the tale actually unrolls itself during the following years.

" 19th Januarie
Laide out for Ribbon in the mourning,
for my syster Jane..... o... 2... 6 "

(The grandmother above-mentioned died on January 17th.)

" more to the shewmaker for her..... 3... 1c "
" ffor my syster Janes diet one qtr from
Christmas to Ladie Day..... 5... 0... 0 "

(A similar item appears regularly once a quarter only while the young lady was actually in residence at Shute.)

" May 1654	
Delivered to my syster Jane for the Coach upwards when she went to London..	1... 0... 0
More to my syster Jane which she gave in the house when shee went away....	0... 10... 0
More to my syster Jane to buy her a Boddesse when shee went away.....	0... 10... 0
Laide out in money for her ose.....	1... 00... 00

Young Jane must have stayed in 'London, probably with her father, for more than a year, for her name is

completely absent from the accounts till the following September. Then it appears that Courtenay allowed himself for a quarter less a fortnight, for her "diet" up to Christmas, 1655. Jane must have gone away on a visit at the beginning of August, for three shillings was paid for "carriage of a box of clothes." She returned to Shute in October for there is an item of 4 shillings and eightpence "for the carriage of the box to (? Kru) of sweetmeates my Ladie sent me, to put it upon Accompt by your order." But immediately on settling down, she realizes her apparel requires renewing, and she begins in good earnest to replenish her wardrobe.

" Sept. 29th

Pd for Red cloth for a petticoat for my syster Jane and a winter coate.....	o..17.. 6
ffor halfe a yearde of hollan and a yearde and halfe-qtr of lace for a gorgett.....	o.. 8.. 6 "
" October 6th 1655	
ffor lace for my syster Jane for a peticoate and for a pr of storkins for her, ffor a hoode and for a Robe for her.....	o.. 6.. 3 "
" May 6th 1656	
Delivered my systdr Jane in money when she went to her syster Everie.....	10.. 0 "

Jane evidently stayed with her sister Everie at Abbotswoton till September.

In the following months of 1656 there are many items named :

" cloth linnen 10..0, shewes 10..6, gloues 4..2, storkins 3..0, more storkins 3..4, and 3 pr of glowes 5..0."	
" Laide out Aprill 1656 to the shew- maker and taylor	o.. 9.. 6
more laide out for her.....	o.. 0.. 6
To my syster Jane in money.....	o.. 5.. 0

“ June 29th 1656.	
Delivered by syster Jane which she desired to buy her necessaries.....	1...0...0
For a white taffita hood for her.....	5...6”
“ Julie 22nd	
My wife laide out for my Syster Jane at Chard	04.00”

(There is only one other mention of his wife.)

“ To my syster Jane Sept. 6th to give her phision one Mr. Turk by my aunt Walronds desire ”	5...0”
---	--------

Jane was evidently not very fit that year, for an earlier entry records :

“ Given doct. hoph at my syster Jane’s sickness, feb. 8th (1656).”	
“ October 6th	
Lawn for a (coryet? gorget) for my syster Jane	5...6
ffor shewes to my syster Janes shew- maker	0..10..6
Delivered her in money in her purse....	0..3..6”

Then at the end of November, 1656, some more elaborate clothes appear to have been required :

“ Pd Mr Collins the Taylor for gloves he sent my syster Jane.....	00..6..0”
--	-----------

(Collins the Taylor belonged to Coleton, where most of Jane’s shopping was done, but in this month for the first time there is a sum of 1...6...0 for “ a petticoat for the winter . . . made at Exeter.” Once she got something in Chard, but if she did any shopping in London, it is not mentioned in Courtenay’s accounts ; her father probably paid for this himself.)

“ Pd Mr Collins his bill for my syster Jane about this tyme making of a chetguerd (? chequered) Black Gounde, silk and silver stuff bodice, a pair of woolen and a pr of scarlet worsted storkins, 2 pr of gloues and a pr of Colosha shues. The whole 13..01..0 ”

The reason for this more elegant attire doth presently appear :

“ December 25th

“ The Entertainment of Mr Crocker here 3 daies at one time, his man and two horses ; and a ffortnight the 2nd time, his brother here with him, part of the time, a Trooper in the Generalls Troope. I suppose it stooode me his entertainment, and the hay and oates and wine extreordnarie more than my own ffamilie would have stooode me .. 5..00..00 about 30s of this hay and oates.”

During the year 1657 my syster Jane continues to require holland for Aprons 00...10...0 storkins etc., but now she has risen to Kid gloves. She also needs money : and in April gets 00...06...0. Then “ more delivered her in money when I went to London 01...00...00.”

“ My syster Everie ” seems to have helped with the purchases for the trousseau, “ against her marriage.” She bought her “ eleven yeards of course holland at 3s. 4d. the yearde, 2 smocks and 3 aprons, and half a dosen night Coifes 1...19...4.”

Again :

“ Aug. 1657
ffor 6 yeards a.. and a naile at 0..7..0
the yearde, for one smock, 2 Aprons,
2 Coifes and a pinner 02..05..0 ”

Later :

“ Pd Collins hr Taylor my Systers bill for
her wedding clothes 45..18.. 6 ”

(Not, unfortunately, specified !)

Then comes a more momentous matter :

“ Sept. 28
Pd olde Mr Crocker his ffirst payment of
my syster's portion according to the
Articles at Exeter, for which I have the
receipt and discharge five hundred
poundes 500..00.. 0 ”

That was the day of the wedding.

A month later, on October 27th :

“ Pd my Brother Crocker according to
the Articles in marriage as part of my
systeres portion, October 27 in Exeter,
two hundred poundes 200..00..00
I have receipt and discharge for it.”

It is not recorded in this note book, whether any
further payments as dowry were paid.

Apparently her father Sir John Pole, did not come
home for the wedding. It is possible that he was ill
for he died the following April. But Courtenay
evidently did his duty as the accounts of the wedding
feast show.

“ Sept. 28th The wedding as follows :

Wine	02..10..00
Rabbits and partridges	00..10..00
For meate to the Butchers.....	03..07..09
More for provissions.....	01..09..00
Oates in the stable, 10 bushels etc.	00..15..00
More for all sortes of provissions for that time	05..07..10 ”

" Nov. 9th 1657

" I laide out when I went to Linum to
bring my syster home upon the way,
and in the whole Journie at least 03..05..00 "

As her marriage portion "my syster Jane" received £1500 from her father. Her husband settled on her the messuages of Lyneham (where she was buried twenty years later) and Yealmpton. In the course of recent searches a curious little bit of history has come to light: in the fifteenth century a daughter of John Bonville, natural son of Lord William Bonville, married a certain Hugh Crocker, whose family owned Lyneham from 1402 until 1740. So the families of Bonville and Pole were once again connected in the persons of Jane Pole and John Crocker.

The newly-married couple had evidently gone to their Crocker home, either to show it to the lady, or in order that the new daughter-in-law might be scrutinized. Apparently the honeymoon was spent at Shute. History does not relate if Jane ever saw her new relatives before her marriage.

" My brother Crocker and my syster
were with me 2 monthes after they
were married: 2 servants and 2 horses
to hay and oates which is the Last I
hope you will be charged with.

This stode me at Least 07..00..00 "

(Actually the last that we hear of "my syster Jane" comes as a significant gleam of light through the mists of time: her little son was called Courtenay Crocker.)

This was almost the last entry. Sir Courtenay's father, Sir John Pole the first Baronet, died on April 16th, and presumably accounts would no longer be kept in quite the same way.

The last entry appears to be as business-like as ever :

“ The Totall of the Disbursements since
I past my Last Accompte being the
17th of May 1657 unto this 17th of
April 1658.

3486..12..6

Receipts 3345..14..5

There then rests due to me from my
ffather

140..18.. 1 ”

There remains much to be quarried by someone with good sight, leisure and infinite patience from this unpretentious human tale, yet, surely, no-one would be more surprised than Courtenay himself to know that his little rough notes should be read with avidity, three hundred years after he had closed the book for the last time.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME LINKS IN THE CHAIN

SIR JOHN POLE, THIRD BARONET.

Born 1649? Shute.

Married Ann Morice.

Inherited the estates in 1695.

This gentleman was a member of the Parliament which settled the crown on William and Mary. His wife Ann was daughter of that ardent Royalist, Sir William Morice, who was active in the Restoration of Charles II and was subsequently his Secretary of State.

It is not surprising, therefore, that their second son, born shortly after the death of the dark-haired monarch, should have been called Carolus.

The third Baronet is important in this story as the ancestor of the two branches of the Pole family. The elder branch held Shute estate till 1926, when with the death of Sir Frederick Arundell de la Pole, it became extinct. The younger and surviving branch, now Carew Pole, is descended from Carolus, second son of John, the third baronet.

This Sir John was the gentleman who lent the original MS of the Collections of the Antiquary to John Prince, who made such good use of the loan. It is perhaps as a *quid pro quo* that Prince in his book, calls him “a most sweet and courteous gentleman.”

SIR WILLIAM POLE, FOURTH BARONET.

Baptised Shute, April 17th, 1678.

Married Elizabeth Warry.

Buried at Shute.

Sir William is better known than his father or some other members of the family, as he was for some years Master of the Household to Queen Anne.

His life-size marble statue by Cheere in the Pole Chapel in Shute Church, shows a tall, fine-looking man with luxuriant wig, in the handsome embroidered full court dress of the period, holding in his hand the wand of office. The carving of the drapery and embroidery is exceptionally fine. His expression is serene, but he must have been something of an autocrat. Having become accustomed to admiring this handsome monument in Shute Church, one finds it somewhat disconcerting to read that the Master had specifically decreed and left a substantial sum in his will to Mr. Trevelyan for fine memorials to be erected to him, one in Shute and one in Colyton Church. A tablet only is to be found in Colyton, but as the statue by Cheere is said to have cost £300, perhaps the "substantial sum" did not run to a second statue.

E. S. Howlett writes of him :

"He was a careful and conscientious man in his estate and private affairs, and would not permit a debt to stand. He instructed his steward at Shute to settle all bills within a fortnight, and if this period was overstepped the steward must consider himself responsible for the debt."

This shows wisdom, for, since he was away from home for long periods, it would have been easy to forget and run up debts ; this would not be difficult in the rather leisurely countryside where farmers and tradespeople generally are anything but prompt in rendering their accounts.

His methodical and orderly character is revealed also in a most fascinating document, drawn up soon after his important appointment, none other than a

Price List for the Royal Household. It seems to have been made out in order to compare the prices paid for various kinds of meat, fish and other commodities. The figures are given in long columns each relating to the reign of one of the sovereigns, Charles II, William and Mary, Queen Anne and finally in 1715. The catalogue would be a veritable gold-mine to historians delving into the social customs and habits of the period, but the only items which can be recorded here are simple : that the beef for Her Majesty's table cost $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound, while that for consumption by the Ladies of the Bedchamber was bought for $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound. Further, a whole carcase of mutton could be bought for 16s. The difference in the prices during those three reigns has considerable significance though it is not great.

The post of Master of the Household was one of considerable responsibility, but it seems also that Sir William was a gallant courtier and a gay young man ; he remained in London for some time after the death of Queen Anne. After the fashionable London life, when he was getting on in years, he returned to the peace of Shute and sought the hand of Elizabeth Warry, daughter of one of his tenants ; it is recorded that they were a happy and devoted pair. In 1733 he took the trouble to state that Elizabeth Warry was his lawful wife, and that they had married "many years since but did not think fit to publish the fact." This rather looks as if the lady had not been quite suitable for the society which he enjoyed in London. Yet, on the other hand, he had more than one picture taken of her, for he left to his only daughter Elizabeth (the "best of Aunts" of whom more later) the one "the drapery of which is 'blow' (? blown ? blue)." He appears to have expected a large family for in an early will he makes provision for possible sons even

up to the sixth. He died of "gout in his stomach" leaving only the two children, the boy William his heir, and his elder sister Elizabeth.

SIR WILLIAM POLE, FIFTH BARONET.

Born February, 1732, at Shute.

Married Elizabeth Mills (died 13th August, 1758) co-heiress of John Mills.

Died March 4th, 1760, at Shute.

This young man inherited great wealth, wide estates, and all the gifts that a bountiful Providence could shower upon him, but his allotted span was short. He lost his father early in life; shortly after leaving New College, Oxford, he was married by Special Licence to Elizabeth Mills.

A copy of a double portrait of the pleasant young pair by Hudson (one of whose pupils was Sir Joshua Reynolds) hangs on the grand staircase at Shute. It was painted shortly after they were married and shows a gaily dressed young girl in low-necked dress with voluminous skirts, decked with frills and furbelows, a coy little turned-up hat, and a natty band of black velvet round her throat. Her husband is in redingote and knee breeches, but the whole picture gives a subtle impression of rural England. He has an expression unusually grave for so young a man, and she looks demure. The lady had inherited large interests in sugar plantations in the island of St. Kitts in the West Indies, the oldest British sugar settlement. She also received a marriage portion of £5,000 in full. Her father had been a banker and sugar planter.

These sugar plantations were of course worked almost exclusively by native labour; consequently the slave trade was a lucrative one. Many of the British owners of the plantations knew little about these distant islands, but Mr. Mills was evidently

well aware of the conditions governing the production of sugar. He had kept exact and illuminating accounts of the buying and selling of negro slaves during the early half of the eighteenth century. These account books, with other estate ledgers, had lain unnoticed at Shute for long years, till Sir Edmund, who lived in the early Victorian era, came across them. On dipping into the records, shortly after the Abolition of the Slave Trade and at a time when these horrors were still fresh in the public mind, he was so horrified at the revelations that he "burned the books sacrificially." It is easy to understand his horror at the blot on his escutcheon, apart from the disgust, but it is unfortunate that such records were destroyed, for they might have shed light on transactions which have always been shrouded in darkness.

A curious coincidence: Jane Maria, a great-granddaughter of Elizabeth Mills, married Edward Schenley, Judge at Havannah in the Mixed Commission for the Suppression of the Slave Trade.

The young Sir John had little enjoyment from his great inheritance, for, left an orphan at nine, he lost his young wife when he was only twenty-one years of age. Within a few months he married again, Anna Maria Palmer. He died less than eighteen months later and bequeathed to her all his furniture and jewels, a post-chariot and "four of my best coach horses." He left also to "my dearly beloved sister Eliz." a "mourning ring of fifty pounds value."

But the new young Baronet had a devoted aunt, his father's sister, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH POLE. "Amitarum optimae."

Born 1728 at Shute.

Married 16th July, 1749.

Died August, 1780. Buried at Shute.

This interesting lady is included in these short sketch-portraits, for without doubt she was a real Pole of Shute; moreover she had an important influence on the young life of her nephew, the builder of new Shute House. Elizabeth, the only daughter of the Master of the Household, was five years older than her only brother, Sir John. She emerges from the pages of history and of legend as a fresh and delightful personality, devotedly fond of her father and brother and a godsend to her little orphan nephew. While her own brother was quite a young boy she married the Rev. George Anstis (son of John Anstis, Garter King of Arms), Vicar of Colyton, 1737-1764. Colyton is only about two miles from Shute by the old road, so probably her young brother would often ride down the hill to see her, for in all his doings she was interested. When he was absent from home they kept up a regular correspondence; some of their letters during the time of an election campaign are still extant. Later, when he was standing as Candidate for the constituency of Taunton she sent him lively and encouraging letters, urging him to be brave and reconciled even in case of defeat.

E. S. Howlett writes: "Her stern reference, with a touch of humour, to the unscrupulous Mayor, showed a strong unbending attitude to mean and contemptible conduct." This Mayor, she comments, "deserves, I think, to be kept in a dungeon all the days of his life. Your judge is a Mayor but behaves like an ape; his heart is of iron, his face is like brass.

When his office is over and pockets are bare,
He'll fear being hunted as much as a hare."

"Or at least, I hope so," she adds slyly.

Similar sentiments seem to have been heard at elections 200 years later.

Sir John's election cry was "Sir John, True Blue and No Coalition," (referring to the Pitt-Newcastle Coalition of 1757). In this campaign he had the help of his brother-in-law, the genial and humorous Rev. George Anstis, who seems to have been well liked, though he did not manage to get his young relative elected.

Alas, for all her love and high hopes for her dear brother, this was his last campaign.

Her passionate devotion, however, was at once re-oriented towards her baby nephew, the orphan Sir John William. She was his only near relative.

In reading of this lonely little boy brought up in the great grey house (far bigger then than it is now) and imagining him roaming in the great Park and neighbouring fields, we used to wonder whether he had any relative other than his widowed step-mother, who had soon re-married. One day in Shute Church someone caught sight of a plain marble tablet high on the North wall; in very small lettering, and in Latin, it bears the almost shy tribute from a very young man, "Elizabethae, amitarum optimae." Evidently this was his gracious thanks to Elizabeth Anstis, the best of aunts, who had devoted herself to him over so many years of his young life.

CHAPTER IX

SIR JOHN WILLIAM DE LA POLE, AND HIS FAMILY

Born at Salisbury June 26th, 1757.

Baptised at Shute Church.

Married Lady Anne Templer of Stover, January 9th, 1779.

Died November 30th, 1799.

Of all the figures which have passed across the pages of this story, not one reveals a more vivid personality than Sir John William, so it is fortunate that more is known of his short life than that of any of the earlier members of the family. His beginnings were not propitious : an only son like his father, and, like him, left an orphan at an early age. Thus it happened that the most affectionate and charming Aunt Elizabeth came to the rescue and devoted herself to the child ; it was a labour of love, for as she had been passionately fond of her only brother, she continued to care for the boy throughout her own life.

His father had appointed Trustees for "the guardianship, tuition, care and education" of his little son John William during his minority. The trustees included Lord North, Elizabeth Anstis, Rev. George Anstis, William Palmer, and Sir George Trevelyan, Bt. These people seem to have had many disagreements, for letters in the archives record, among other troubles, a subpoena against Trevelyan for not making an allowance to the heir sufficient for a gentleman in his position.

It was not quite fair of Sir George to keep the small boy short, particularly as his father had left to him (Sir George) both Northdown and the Dyehouse

in the parish of Shute. It may have been, of course, because most of the boy's money was in Government Security Funds, which the Trustees were not empowered to touch till he should attain his majority.

It must have been a lonely existence for the child who lived for long periods in the gloomy Tudor Mansion, ill-lit by lamps and impossible to heat adequately. Fortunately he loved the grounds, and being an expert horseman at an early age, and devoted to animals, he spent long days riding in the grounds and round the estates, where all the tenants and farmworkers regarded him with proud affection. He would ride through the 120-acre Deer Park, watching the young fawns hiding in the bracken, or the herd sniffing the air, as he moved soundlessly on the mossy turf. He would often ride up to the Beacon Hill ; there, in those days before the great clumps of rhododendrons had spread their luxuriance, and before the immense trees on the height had fully grown, he would watch from the Beacon, that curious beehive-like building, the ships in Seaton Bay. Did he wonder how the Beacon came there, or when, or why ? It was probably in a good state of preservation then, though it is now a ruin among thick shrubs. He would gallop along the level greensward for nearly a mile, and through the wide pasture which, long, long after his time, still known as the Race Course, was ploughed up for food in the Second World War. As he came down the hill, past the picturesque thatched East Lodge, perhaps he reined up his pony and looked out on the wonderful vista in front of him, down past the goyle, over the smiling fields, all his own. More than a century later, this was the favourite outlook of the lovely Lady Pole-Carew. When she came to visit Shute House after it had been let, she would often stop her car just at

the dip and stand for a moment or two contemplating the wide peaceful valley.

When the boy came to a hillock right in the midst of the park, did he say, as he turned towards his home, "When I am a man, I shall build a nice *little* house here, in the sun?" Who knows? His active mind must have been busy with many a dream in those quiet childish days.

In due course he was sent to school at Winton College, Bournemouth, and from there to Corpus Christi, Oxford. He was naturally a clever, eager student; his education and the early feelings of responsibility towards his estates developed his poise and dignity. He was moreover a wealthy man, both by inheritance and because his lands had been well developed during his long minority.

Polwhele records that when Sir John William was quite a young man, after leaving College, Ash House at Musbury (the home of the Drake family), some three miles or so across the valley, was advertised to be let furnished, and shortly afterwards, just on the threshold of manhood, he went into residence there. It seems as if Sir John William was not contented with his old home; it was an odd decision for so young a man, a bachelor, to take. However, the following September a serious fire broke out which burnt down all the outhouses and all the stables, though fortunately there was no harm done to Ash House itself. A striking side-light is thrown on the picture by the report that thirteen coach horses and hunters belonging to Sir John William were destroyed. It was not a modest stable and the loss must have been a severe blow, for as one can see from the many paintings which have survived of his hunters and dogs, he was genuinely fond of animals.

He was a man full of energy and enthusiasm, also

zealous for the common weal, as one can see from his many public activities. One of his projects is described in a little note book bound in white calf. The fly leaf is entitled :

“ J. W. Pole, 1788.”

The name, decorated with many festoons and flourishes, is written in large copper-plate. Then follow :

“ *Proposals* addressed to Gentlemen, Clergy and Freeholders for establishing a Fund for the discharge and relief of persons imprisoned for small debts.”

This preamble is followed by lines from James Thomson’s *The Seasons*, which he again quotes in various places. He wrote out a business-like scheme under headings as formal as a company’s prospectus, for the collection and distribution of the Funds. But he includes also sympathetic comments, on these unfortunate persons, and quotes Mrs. Inchbald’s poignant romance. He seems to have been impressed by the book *State of the Prisons*, published a few years earlier by John Howard whom he calls “ the ever to be revered Mr. Howard.” To give time, money and energy to the poor and outcast from his happy and peaceful home is evidence of the serious thinker.

Seeing the many beautiful new mansions which had grown up, and others still in course of erection in various parts of the country, and doubtless hearing a good deal of talk about the popular work of the Adam brothers, Sir John William seems to have wished to emulate their achievements.

On coming into the property, he would realize that his estates having been nursed for so long were prosperous. He seems to have begun to increase his properties and invested in more land, but his most important purchase was the whole estate of Shute with many neighbouring farms. In 1560 Mr. Pole

of Colcombe, father of the Antiquary, had purchased the old Manor House and other buildings, and at the same time had taken a lease of the extensive Shute lands for 1,200 years. Sir John William had bought the Manors of Shute and Whitford from the Petres in 1788. So the Poles had lived as tenants of the estate for more than two centuries before becoming owners of the lands.

In due course, Sir John William married the beautiful Anne Templer of Stover. Tradition has it that she was a childhood's playmate. Perhaps she was. In any case he would quite probably have met her sometime when he was hunting in South Devon. Her brother, the Reverend John Templer of Lindridge (the early home of the Templers) kept a pack of harriers there. However that may be, they met and married and he took her home to the old grey Tudor Mansion. But Lady Anne too had other ideas. She had been brought up at Lindridge, near Newton Abbot, the enormous old mansion of the Templer family, in the vast park, of which it is said that the building itself covered an acre of ground. The ball-room was renowned in the neighbourhood, for its size and grandeur.

But her grandfather, James Templer, Esq., had erected a handsome, more modern and more convenient, though smaller mansion known as Stover Lodge. In Polwhele's *Devonshire* there is an engraving of the new house at Stover, dated 1773, shortly after it was built.

Stover Lodge is situated on a broad gentle slope in a beautiful part of South Devon, and has views in every direction. It is a handsome Adam-style building, simple in appearance, and standing four-square to all the winds that blow. The large rooms are well proportioned and generously planned, though



[By permission of "Country Life."]

EAST ELEVATION showing TUDOR ADDITIONS. The whole section which extends from the southern flank of the square tower towards the south, composed the original Bonville Manor House. The flat buttress (pair to one on the west side) towards the southern corner, together with the curiously capped chimney on the ridge of the roof, indicate the extent of the great fireplace in the Hall.

The Tudor Mansion formerly extended right across the drive, beyond the tree to be seen on the right. We know that the gatehouse was opposite the porch, so presumably its position would indicate the centre line of the House. All the northern section was demolished in 1785, and the remainder shored up by buttresses ; these can be seen in the shaded face. The sash windows which superseded the mullions can be seen in the square tower ; the quatrefoil ornaments in battlements are also discernible.

perhaps a little heavy and ornate in the decoration. It is quite obvious that this new house had considerable influence on the design for Shute House, as will be seen in later accounts of it. Lady Anne held decided views on her future abode, for she must have watched with considerable pleasure, during the years when she was growing up, the growth of her grandfather's new and attractive home. She could hardly fail, therefore, to look forward to a modern mansion of her own when she married.

Anne Templer was married in the little parish church of Teigngrace where innumerable Templers have been christened, married and buried. Sir John William had evidently kindly memories of the place, for he presented to the church a fine urn of Coade's manufacture.

Evidently Sir John William was largely in agreement with my Lady, particularly as he had already felt that the Tudor building was hardly adequate for his wife, and for the hospitality for which he was becoming renowned. About a year after the purchase of the estate was completed, the work began. The first essential was the demolition of a section of the Tudor Mansion in order to make it possible to drive right through the Tudor gateway, and up, past the remnant, to the new site. No one, alas, knows anything of the original Western facade, but the wall erected, the buttresses, and several odd-shaped windows are all extremely tantalizing. The demolitions released some good strong stones which have obviously been used in the massive foundations of the new project.

Lady Anne was evidently something of an artist, for she had sketched a view of the Shute House from the south, which Polwhele reproduced in his *History of Devon*. It is inscribed as being the work of "Lady

Anne de la Pole, 1794." Incidentally, the pictures prove that the house was in fact built "in a field of standing corn," or at least on gently undulating pasture on an open landscape without woods.

It seems as if, realizing the greatness of his ancestors, Sir John William had made up his mind to build a distinguished family seat, and to found a worthy succession. When they went to the new house, he and his lady must have been a gay and happy pair, in their lovely home, with many friends and their charming children growing up around them. At that time the two small boys were respectively seven and three years of age, and the little Marianne was six; one can well imagine how the children loved the pleasant sunny house.

Sir John William may have cast his mind back over the four hundred momentous years during which the Bonville Manor House had stood foursquare, and may have looked forward with high hopes to the family living happily ever after in great prosperity and happiness for many generations in the new home which he had built. Everything seemed to point to a great future, and the union of these two of like interests and aims must have been a happy one.

Lady Anne is still of course famous for her beauty, but in her day she was no less renowned for her charm and gaiety. She was keenly interested in the building of the new house, but knew a great deal also about the development of the estate. It is said that she was responsible for the planting of the fine woods on Shute Hill.

It was about this time that Sir John William appears to have sought out and examined the manuscript *Collections towards a Description of Devon*, written by his learned ancestor, Sir William Pole the Antiquary. He would realize the historical value of this amazing

work, and although (like the Sibylline books of old) it was shrinking, through pages and indeed parts gradually being lost, it still contained much valuable history. He therefore had copies made from the originals and printed in book form in 1792. The original manuscripts are now at Antony, but the copy made by hand by John Prince in 1701 is in the British Museum.

About this time, inspired perhaps by the history of his family, or by the thought of the furtherance of its prestige, he applied for licence to assume the name of de la Pole, as he was descended from the ancient family of that name. This was granted by King George III at the Court of St. James, and entered at the College of Arms.

An entertaining side-light is shed on his ambitions for his family and his fatherly solicitude for his children in a letter written a few years later to his son William (then aged ten) at Sherborne School in Dorset. It reads :

“ My dear little boy,

“ I return you many thanks for your answer to my letter . . . Your writing is not quite as good as I ought to expect from the consideration of the time you have learned that useful branch of education . . . Your mode of spelling is very incorrect indeed . . . I desire that you will show this letter to Mr. Cutler as soon as you have read it.”

This is specially interesting in showing that correct spelling had now become imperative for a gentleman, and that the “ taste and fancy of the speller ” of earlier writers, even down to Sir Courtenay, was no longer permissible. Unfortunately this letter and its present owner can no longer be traced. It was quoted verbatim in an article contributed to *The Times* at

the time of the 400th Anniversary of Sherborne School in 1950, by A. B. Gourley, author of *A History of Sherborne School*.

Another letter at a slightly later period, fragile and faded, in the City Library, Exeter, is dated from Eton College, November 28th, 1797. It is from Mr. ? Ragueman, acknowledging a "draft for £134 7s. 9d. amount of Mast. de la Poles last bills." He adds "your boys are both well and send their duty."

Sir John William and the Lady Anne certainly made a strikingly handsome pair and it is fortunate that their pictures were painted several times by the great artists of their day. Of the three fine portraits of Sir John William, an early one depicts him in the uniform of Deputy-Lieutenant of Devonshire: the background of this portrait is the window of the Chinese Room (the small room on the east of the front door), showing the porch and pillars of the front (North) door; he is holding the architect's plan of the new house in his hand. He looks a bluff, genial man, the typical country gentleman. Another, an exceptionally fine likeness by Romney, shows him in hunting pink holding his crop and hat, a dignified figure standing with extraordinary grace by a tree, with fair hair brushed well back (it may have been a small wig like those in the pictures of Pitt the Younger) and a young face of intelligence and beauty, quite exceptional for a man, but with strong fine features.

Lady Anne de la Pole was painted by both Romney and Thomas Beach in the lovely dresses of the period and by several other portrait painters, in various becoming attitudes. In two full-length portraits the dress is of white satin, the folds of which are exquisitely soft and full of sheen. Her skin seems to have been beautifully fresh and delicate.

Another portrait of the lady shows her in a blue hat ; of this one there is an interesting note. The late Queen Mary, a keen collector of china, had purchased an old piece, on which a copy of this picture was painted with the name "Lady Anne de la Pole." She enquired from Lady Beatrice Pole-Carew, who was a personal friend, if the original painting was still to be found at Shute House.

In the Victoria and Albert Museum also there is a small blue and white cameo-medallion of the lady among the Wedgwood exhibits. It is evident that she was indeed a popular figure. The large number of portraits still in existence prove that she must have been a striking social beauty of that epoch. Whether all these sittings were due to her husband's pride in her, or to her own vanity cannot now be judged.

George Romney, when at the height of his powers, painted the almost life-size portraits of Sir John William and his lady in 1786. According to his rough, ill-written and badly-spelled diary, they gave him nine sittings at their London home in Bedford Square, his fee for the pair being 160 guineas. The pictures were despatched in March, 1788 to Colyton House. After the family moved up to the new Shute House, they hung in the Dining-room, where they can just be perceived in the picture facing page 163. That of "Lady Anne" was never taken out of the house, nor shown at any of the big Art Exhibitions, which explains, perhaps, why this magnificent work (see frontispiece) burst upon an astonished world when put up for sale in 1913, by Sir Frederick de la Pole the last descendant of Sir John William, in order to pay Death Duties. The picture realized 40,000 guineas, the highest price ever paid for any portrait, even exceeding Gainsborough's "Duchess of Devonshire" by £10,000. "Lady Anne" was taken to

America and is now in the possession of Mr. Alvan Fuller in Boston, Mass.

Sir John William was a much occupied man, for in addition to his family, and the care of his large estates and his fine stud, he had many public duties both in Devon and London, as he was M.P. for West Looe for several years. He had been Deputy Lieutenant for Devonshire after he was married, and was also Lieutenant-Colonel in the Royal East Devon Cavalry. When the possibility of invasion threatened he roused his neighbours to National defence. It is strange that during the last decade of the century, when warfare and revolution were rampant just across the little stretch of water that could be seen from his windows, little apprehension appears to have been felt in the Devon countryside. As an example it may be noted that on October 6th, 1791, just about the time of the uproars in France, the death of Mirabeau and the flight of the Royal Family of France, "a very important meeting" of the Feoffees in Colyton was called to elect some new members and to deal with the translation of the ancient charter. Yet, a few years later, the inhabitants of the southern part of the county began to feel uneasy about the French, in 1796. When the French invasion was feared a return of stock and crops was made by farmers near the coast. This ancient document, listing the Shute inventory, is still to be seen at Antony.

Among other honours showered upon him, was the freedom of the city of Exeter. In the Historical MS is a letter from Sir John Pole (undated, but from civic evidence written after his marriage), thanking the City "for the honour they have done him" in conferring on him the Freedom of Exeter.

Life apparently went on without anxiety, indeed with high hopes, for the family who kept open house,

and entertained in a lordly way for hunts, races and other meetings. They were all so gay and happy with their many friends, and were renowned for their lavish hospitality. Among their guests at one time the Prince Regent honoured the house by his presence. The period was probably the latter half of 1789 ; at that time the King's illness was of only a few months' duration and the Regency was not again required until 1811, at which time Sir John William had already died. Moreover, the visit would not have taken place earlier as the new house was not finished, and, doubtless, the host was proud to show off to his distinguished visitor his fine house, three charming children and his beautiful wife.

For the entertainment of his guests there were many horses, stabling for twelve and many others available, and judging from the fine paintings by Sartorius, the quality was high. Among the sports provided was racing on a miniature Race Course on the top of the Beacon Hill, the long flat stretch of pasture marked on old maps. This must have given a good deal of amusement, but was probably of use also for exercising the horses when the family was absent.

One of their ways of entertaining guests was by whist parties, for there is abundant evidence to show that in the middle of the eighteenth century this card game was regularly played in the coffee houses of London and in fashionable society, and was continuing to increase in public estimation. Howlett says that, "the exquisite collection of card tables throws some light on the social side of their life."

During his short life Sir John William seemed to be burning with ambitious ideas to ensure the future of his family and the greatness of his name. As soon as he had bought the Shute estate and built the costly

mansion, he began to acquire additional properties, some of which in earlier days had belonged to the family. At an early date he purchased Colyton House which he and his family had occupied while the new house was being built, a charming, though small, Queen Anne villa with lovely garden completely surrounded by a twenty-foot wall.

The Great House, Colyton, and several other large houses and lands he acquired in 1790 from Sir George Yonge in exchange for the manor of Talaton, which had been part of the domain of the Antiquary.

Sir John William also purchased Colcombe Castle about this time, evidently with the idea of re-building it in the grand style as originally designed by the ill-starred Henry Courtenay, Earl of Devon. In his will, Sir John William decreed that his heirs should build a good substantial dwelling-house with suitable offices; and at least five acres of land in Colcombe Park, where his widow should live. Alas, it seems as if Colcombe Castle has always been under a curse, for it lies a ruin to this day.

It has been stated that during his lifetime the size of the estates had increased to 10,000 acres, but unfortunately at his death several of the properties had to be sold before they had really recovered and been put in proper order. He was insistent that his beautiful new house should not be neglected, so decreed that a sum should be put aside annually to keep the fabric in perfect order.

It was a real tragedy that Sir John William should have been called home at such an early age, forty-four years (though his father was only twenty-seven) when he was so eager and full of glowing interests, at a time too, when it seemed as if Fortune were opening all her store on him and his family.

Sir John William seems to have had an extraordinary

terror of being buried alive. In his will, dated only a few weeks before his death, he asks that his body shall not be taken from the house "till the clearest and most unequivocal signs of death appear." Even then, a codicil states that the doctors should "not proceed to the last ceremonies till certain indubitable symptoms of death appear and that the coffin should not be closed till ascertained in presence of six persons."

But he has left behind him his own monument in the beautiful and stately mansion which will always be associated with his name.

He left £5,000 each to his sons and £10,000 to Marianne his only daughter, but curiously enough there is no mention of the sugar estates at St. Kitts in the West Indies.

Lady Anne survived her husband by thirty-three years, years, alas, of considerable anxiety and sadness. She lost her younger son a few years after his father, at the age of sixteen, and the troubles of her son and grandson must have weighed heavily on her, but she did have the joy of seeing five grandchildren growing up, and of being able to see the amazing celebrations of the coming of age of her eldest grandson, the heir. She had the joy, too, of having her much loved brother not far off, at her old home at Lindridge, till within a few days of her own death.

CHAPTER X

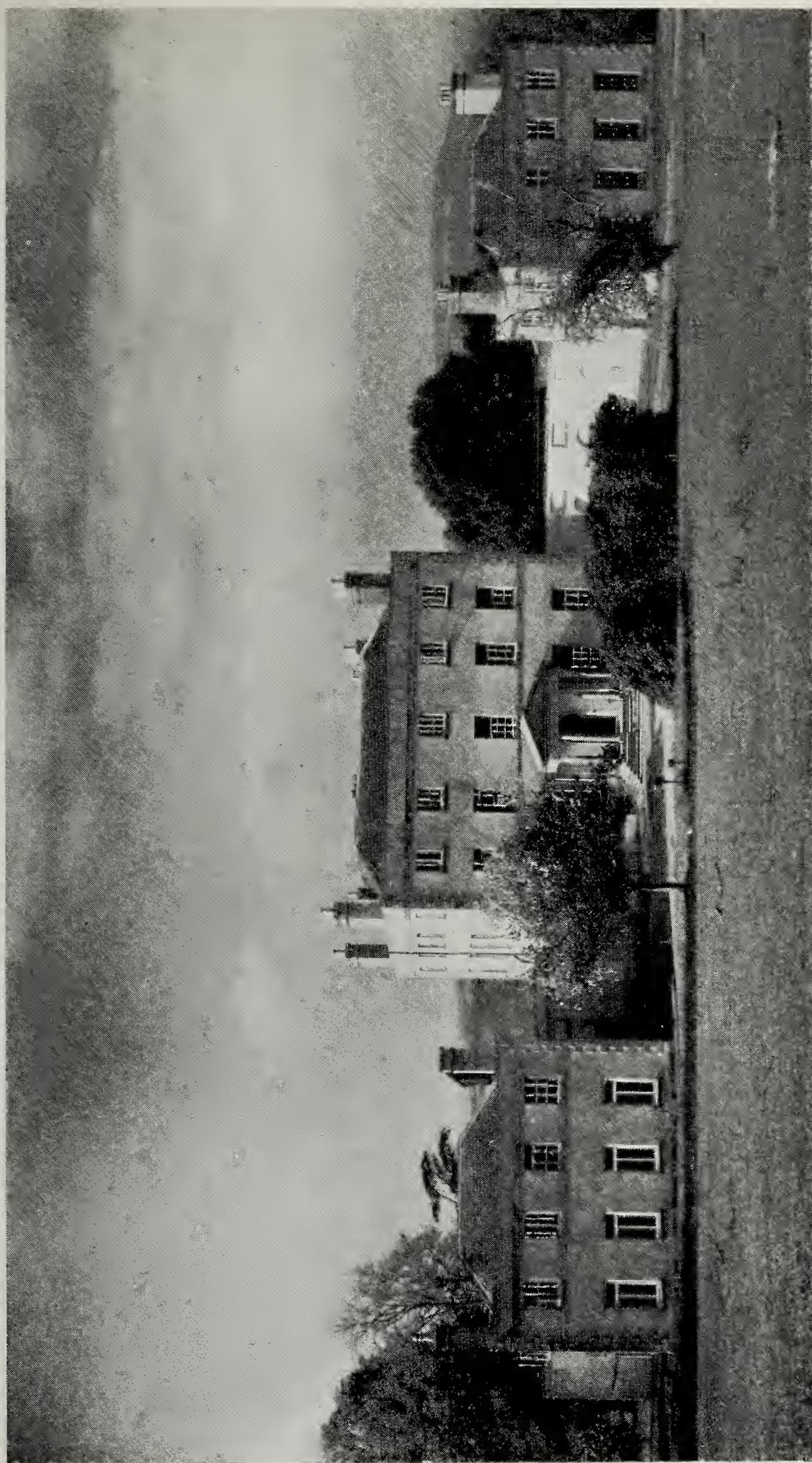
THE NEW SHUTE HOUSE

In a field of standing corn he built
In a field of straight green corn.
His eldest son shall never be heir
Nay, never his eldest born.

So runs the curse which lies on those who despoil the riches of the land, a crime almost unheard of in an agricultural county. It is not clear why Sir John William had decided in such haste to begin the building, for he had already completed the purchase of the estates. Yet, the fact remains that the family was transplanted down to Colyton, where they stayed in Colyton House for the two years till the new house was completed. This hurried removal seems to indicate that for some reason or other they could no longer live in the old Tudor Mansion. Moreover, it must have been vitally urgent to begin the construction if, in order to lay the foundations, the green corn had to be cut down.

The curse followed his descendants to the end.

Looking from the esplanade at Seaton, far away in the distance, up the green valley of the River Coly, Shute House stands high on the side of Shute Hill sheltered from the north and east by thick woods, a picturesque background to the whiteness of the buildings at all times. From afar, the many windows like great unblinking eyes seem to be gazing down the valley to the broad curve of the English Channel. So clear and high stands out the building that for many generations seamen have used the place as a landmark ; to this day fishermen in the Bay take their bearings from Shute, and the moment the west wing is seen in alignment with the edge of the landslip, the crab-pots are dropped.



SHUTE HOUSE FROM THE NORTH-EAST. As no exterior alterations have been made since the house was built, the Adam Principles of "Movement" stand out clearly against the contours of the countryside, the "rising and falling, advancing and receding, the concavity and convexity." The regularity and symmetry is striking, even as to the window voids which can be discerned on the eastern face. The wing on the left, where formerly the kitchen was situated, now accommodates the Victorian Theatre, with the picture gallery above it. Behind the high curved walls, covered galleries lead to the wings.

In Spring the delicate green of the feathery larches vie with the pale purple of the wild rhododendrons, while the golden glory of the beech in Autumn crowns the brow of the hill like a halo. In the wide park magnificent oaks extending in great undulating circles, sweep down to the ground and spread unrestricted in all directions ; so great is the circumference that seventy people touching hands at arms length cannot completely encircle some of the oldest oaks. A huge one was blown down in 1937 during a north-easterly gale and was estimated to be over 500 years old.

To the south of the mansion two magnificent dark cedars stand sentinel where as striplings they were planted nearly 200 years ago. Beyond them to the south again, two younger cedars, now some fifty years old, bear witness to the wisdom of a later Pole, who realized that trees, like all men, are mortal.

Amid the hills and dales of the great park, shady pools, the haunts of wild duck, are scattered here and there ; sheep, too, for many generations have trimmed the close firm turf of the Shute Lawns, and have lain down in the green pastures, beside the still waters.

From a point a little to the west of the front door a broad shady footpath leads up to the Beacon on the top of the hill. This, the Lady Walk, being a gentle slope, was designed for the delicate creatures in train and crinoline, who wished to avoid undue exertion, and to preserve their complexions from the sun.

The peace, indeed the quite extraordinary tranquillity, of Shute is not even ruffled by the distant railway lying in the deep cutting, which moderates all unwelcome sights and sounds.

Coming through the ancient gateway, past the mysterious and unfathomable Tudor Mansion, it is delightful and surprising to see the drive rolling up

the gentle slope till, curving over the brow of the hill, the visitor comes suddenly in sight of the main elevation of the handsome dignified mansion in all its simplicity and grace.

It is intriguing to meditate on the probability that the Lady Anne and her husband must often have strolled in this direction along the old track, forerunner of the present drive. It is recorded that the position of his projected new house had been chosen by Sir John William long before, when he was a small boy, so perhaps he and his lady joined the architect in prospecting for the best site ; though it seems pretty certain that the approach to this eminence with its wonderful views must have marked it as obvious.

Lady Anne had probably decided views on the subject, for Stover Lodge, the mansion of her family was similarly placed foursquare, but on a low eminence.

The main part of Stover Lodge is altogether larger, heavier and more elaborate than the new house contemplated at Shute ; however, it undoubtedly shows the trend of the period. The influence of the Adam brothers had spread "like a disease" over the whole country in the sixties and seventies of the eighteenth century, carrying along many of the greatest architects of the times, and a host of copyists ; it affected profoundly all the domestic architecture of the last half of that century and indeed beyond.

The name of the architect who designed Shute House has not yet been brought to light ; it is usually described as "in the Adam style." There is strong internal evidence to show that whoever he was, the architect was a follower, indeed a disciple of the great Robert, and knew his master's work intimately. He was steeped in the Adam principles, yet at the same

time his work was not merely imitative, for in this pleasant family mansion, he shows an easy assurance in his own distinctive variations. In the years 1787-1789, when Shute was being built, the peak period of the many works of Robert Adam was sufficiently distant for critics and admirers generally, to appraise the style and to examine the works and the vast number of sketches and designs now in Sir John Soane's Museum. Although many of the Adam creations are vast edifices, there is no doubt that the new idea of interior charm and domestic comfort gave to modern life something very different from what had been considered desirable in the first half of the century. Sir John William and Lady Anne had probably visited many of the elegant new homes of their friends, so it is not surprising that they began to think of a home with all the comforts, charms and latest gratifications of life at that epoch, elegant, interesting and suitable to the conveniences and social pleasures of a wealthy family. At the same time this was not a vast mansion but a comfortable home.

Fortunately, since the park and surrounding country have remained quite unspoiled, and no alterations whatever have been made to the exterior of the house, the construction can be appreciated in a way that is not possible with many Adam buildings, which, owing to change and decay in cities, additions, alterations and other factors, can no longer be seen in their original form.

In the *Works in Architecture* by Robert and James Adam first published in 1773, which explained and illustrated some of the greatest achievements of their golden age, their young (and indeed also their older) followers have found a treasure house. The principle of "Movement," resuscitated from ancient times and elaborated by the brothers, was early appreciated by

the designers of some of the magnificent great houses during the middle decades of the century ; this principle undoubtedly accounts largely for the attraction of Shute House. The rise and fall of the different parts of the building, the " concavity, and convexity," the " advancing and receding " produce a satisfying diversity of light and shade following the contours of the landscape, both in the background and the foreground. That the house should form a real part of its surroundings was appreciated, and these ideas were clearly grasped by many an artist, anonymous and unknown, who, while absorbing them, developed along his own individual lines.

Such was the case with the designer of Shute House. Here was a building, perhaps not sufficiently vast or magnificent to be undertaken by a more famous architect, but offering wonderful scope and opportunity to a man of genuine artistic and cultural worth. Fortunate was the gentleman to whom this undertaking was entrusted, fortunate in many ways : first to have a site exceptionally well suited to a fine house, second, as it appears, to have had almost unlimited funds and time at his disposal ; but perhaps best of all, at a time when it was common to alter, renovate or improve old houses, he was lucky to be able to design and construct the house from the cutting of the first sod.

The new Shute House is a gem, in a completely harmonious setting, perfect in proportion, meticulously correct in every detail and altogether satisfying. Indeed, the conception and its fulfilment are so fine that it is surprising that the designer did not blazon his name over the lintel of the front entrance.

The house took nearly two years to build, and the whole is estimated to have cost £50,000, a stupendous sum in those days. It was, moreover, a comparatively

small house considered in the light of many contemporary lordly mansions. The central block of the building contains only four reception rooms and nine large bedrooms, just a nice comfortable family residence. Apart from these and the Chapel, all the rest of this house was at the disposition of servants and retainers, including two small self-contained dwellings in each wing for married men. Moreover, the East Lodge, the Tudor Lodge, the stables for twelve, with two small flats, a cottage and a bailiff's house provided accommodation for the twenty servants who were employed during the greater part of the nineteenth century.

At first sight the front of the house with walls 3-ft. 6-in. thick looks massive (see picture facing page 156). Moreover, the general impression is a little chilling owing to the severe simplicity of the design, almost entirely lacking in ornament and depending for its beauty on the perfect regularity of its construction. It is a well-balanced composition, with its three-storeyed central range and the curving galleries connecting the two-storeyed wings. On the north side the whole appearance seems to be geometrically correct even as to the windows, 12-ft. high on the first floor, 8-ft. on the second, and 4-ft. on the top ; being casements these last give an impression of greater height.

Moreover, taking the door as centre, the symmetry of doors, windows, niches, wings, chimneys, and even the ancient lamp-brackets, is so strictly maintained that the plan seems to have been drawn on graph paper (as indeed it probably was!). Although the window voids in the east and west elevations are regularly spaced and placed, they were evidently inserted merely to keep up the illusion, for they are blocked up. The idea of the sealing-up seems to have

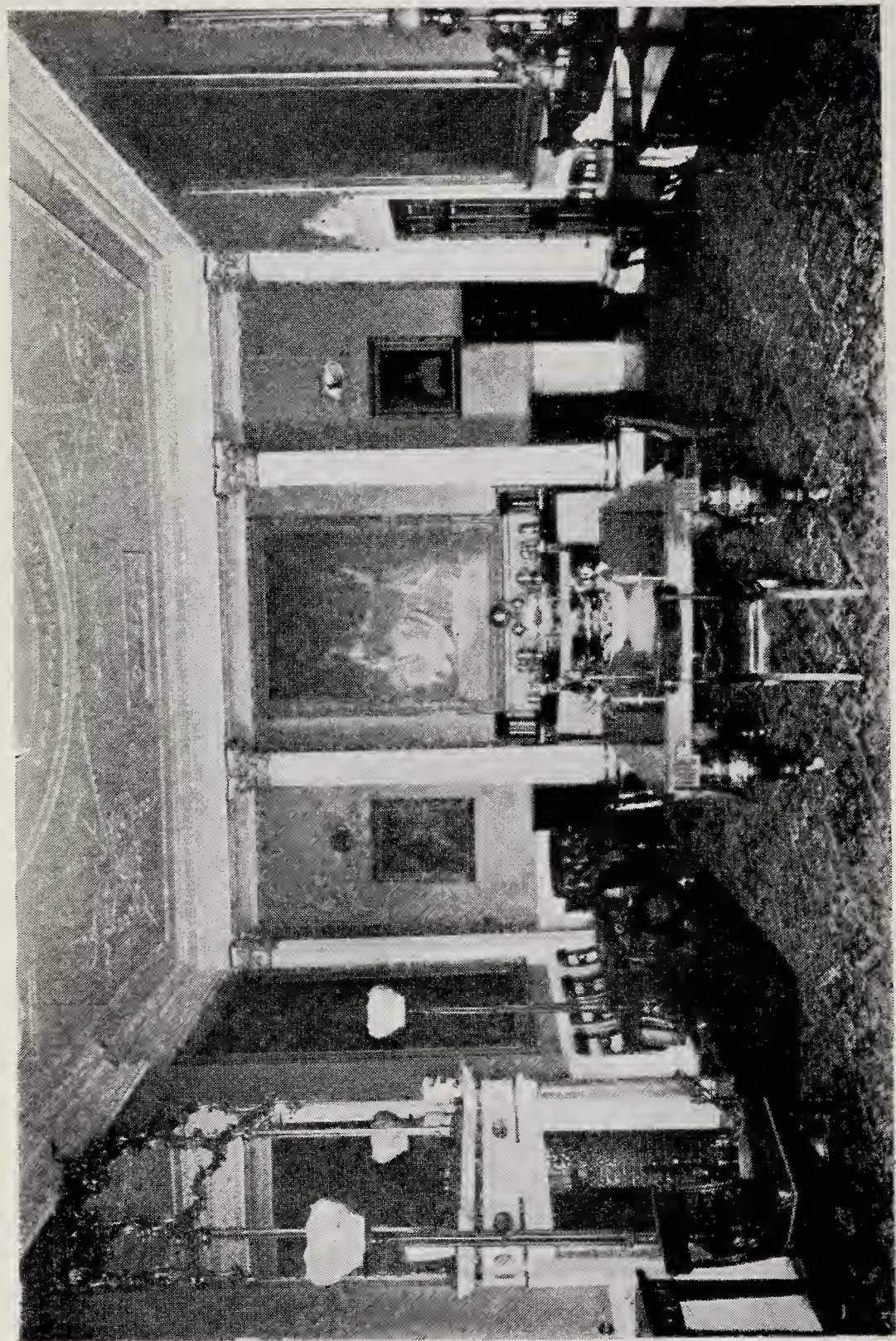
had nothing to do with the Window Tax (though this had been increased only a few years earlier), for the position of the frames are all in the direct line of the chimneys, consequently impossible to open, but fashion appears to have prevailed.

The rise and fall in the line of the roofs, and the concavity of the north elevation, soften the rigidity of the central block. The low curves from east and west terminating in the two-storeyed wings give the subtle impression of welcoming arms.

Being built on a slope as it is, the south side appears to be inordinately tall, the impression being accentuated by the parapet round the roof. Thus, on the southern elevation the four stories include two fine large sunny rooms on the ground floor, while on the north they include only a semi-basement with a splendid range of dry spacious beer and wine cellars, store-rooms and boiler rooms.

All the ground floor and semi-basement windows were formerly fitted with ornamental iron gratings, some of which have now been removed. They made the only decorative addition to the otherwise plain house, rather like an Irish lace collar on a plain grey stuff dress. The reason for them is obscure, but it is quite plausible that the rumblings of the French Revolution may have caused a desire for security in a place so near the South Coast. On the other hand, they may have been simply protection against burglars. They still add a slightly decorative note.

The house is somewhat unusual in having, as it were, no back door. Very large useful yards and kitchen premises are provided by a clever arrangement of the walls, the straight high wall on the south and the curves of the corridors on the north. The two yards within these are, therefore, conveniently placed for the kitchen, within easy reach by servants



THE DINING-ROOM IN VICTORIAN TIMES, showing the ornate mirrors and the decorations over the small pictures, the tall oil lamps and solid furniture. The shadowy portrait of Lady Anne hangs on the right of the fireplace, opposite that of Sir John William, the builder; the double portrait of his young parents can be seen between the pillars.

and tradesmen, yet completely secluded from outside or from the windows.

The extensive range of stables, in the ingenious form of a horseshoe, is neatly hidden from the house in a dell, surrounded by trees, quite out of sight of the windows.

INTERIOR.

The chaste grey classical portico with its plain tympanum, pillars, and shallow steps, make a gracious and impressive entrance.

The outward appearance of the house, being plain, gives no foretaste of the beauty and elegance which meet the eye when the double doors open into the long and lofty Hall ; this stretches the whole depth of the house, opening on to the lawns on the south. The frieze and ceilings here are richly decorated and bear replicas of the Pole Arms with the motto “*Pollet virtus.*”

Beyond the double glass doors with their graceful eighteenth century fanlight, the simple cantilever shallow-stepped staircase without any visible support can be seen winding down against the three walls. The great stained-glass window over the staircase again shows proudly the arms of the builder.

The magnificent Spanish mahogany doors with simple gouged pattern, and elaborately fretted brass handles and finger plates add warm colour. In the Hall these doors have each an entablature of plaster work, but the original doors on the inside of the reception rooms had none.

Alas, the only builder's estimate still extant is for the mahogany used for these doors.

Most of the floor-boards, joists and roof trusses were cut from copses on the estates. The late Miss Blanche de la Pole used to recall that in her father's

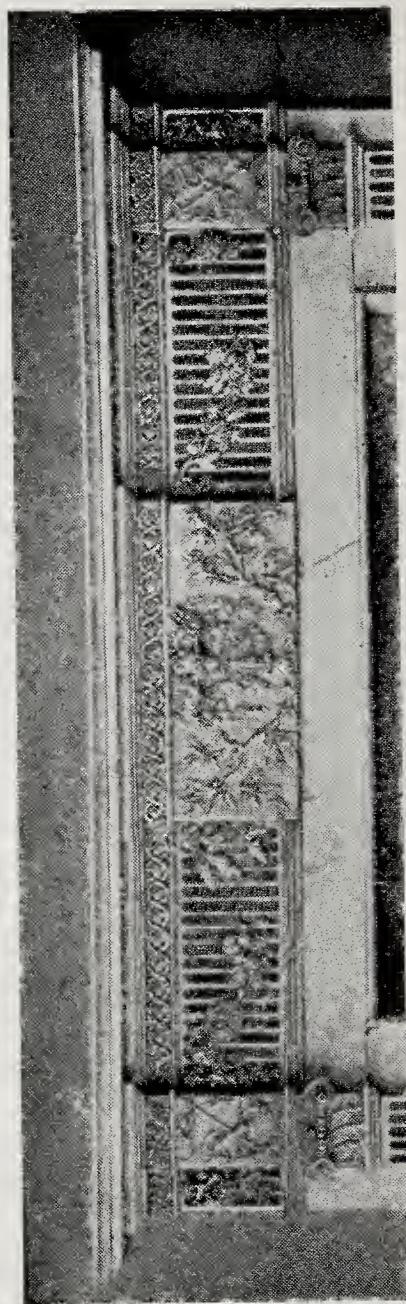
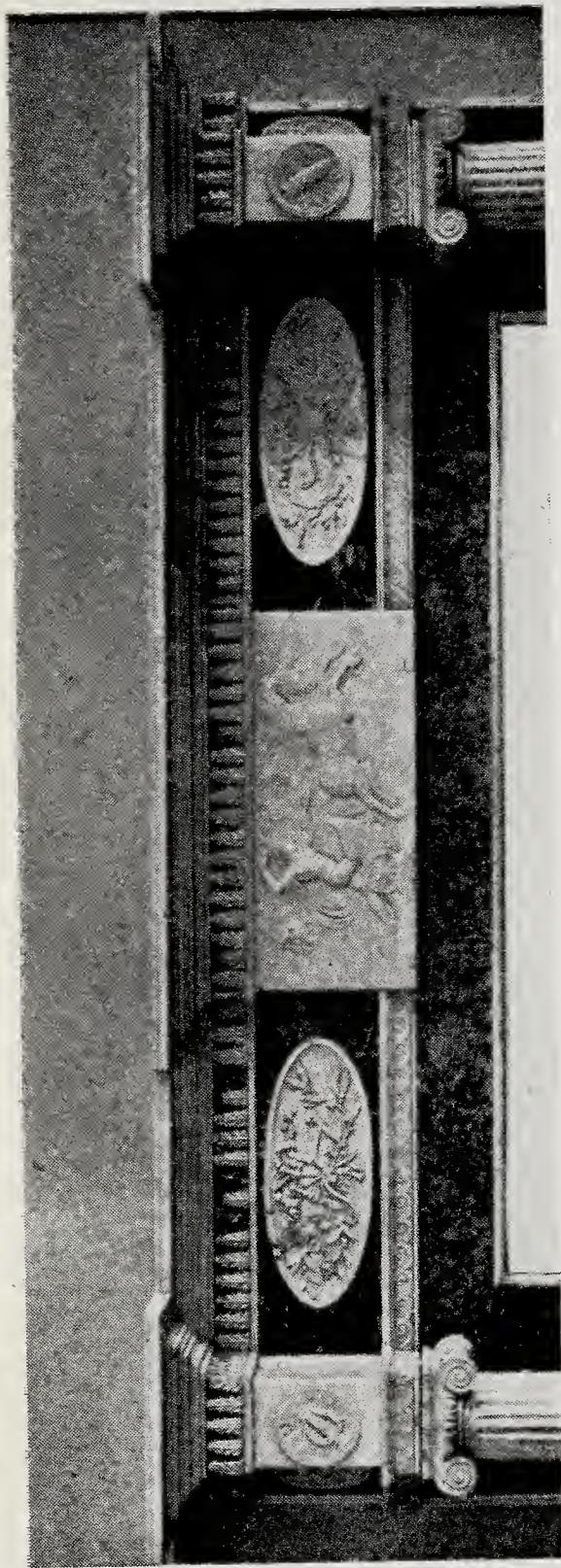
time there was constant trouble with the floors because the original timber used had not been sufficiently seasoned. Can it be surmised that this also was due to the haste implied by : “ In a field of standing corn he built ” ?

The hall is perfectly simple and symmetrical, the identical doors on either side opposing each other, as do even the niches.

First comes the Boudoir to the left and the Library to the right, followed by two smaller rooms with windows east and west, then after passing through the double doors, we come to the Dining-room and Drawing-room.

These are the most magnificent rooms of the house ; both face due south, one on either side of the Hall. The great semi-circular bays, with triple lights, almost as wide as the whole room, extending from ground level to the frieze, give quite a striking sensation of light and space. As regards size, form and orientation, these must be among the finest of the period. The outlook, resembling that from an upper floor (on account of the sloping ground) discloses the gentle beauty of the Devon landscape which at once lures visitors to the windows.

The Dining-room is really beautiful, with its “ Section d’or ” proportions, light and lofty, with delicately tinted walls, perhaps among the loveliest rooms of its size ever built (pages 163 and 179). The decoration throughout is less ornate or profuse and altogether more dainty than in many similar mansions of an earlier date. It is lengthened by the fashionable expedient of introducing pillars to support the carrying walls. These pillars of a Corinthian design with acanthus capitals give a decorative impression. Oddly enough, it may be noted that these handsome pillars are for ornament rather than for use. This



DRAWING-ROOM CHIMNEY-PIECE (above) of rouge Seahery and white marble showing the son of the Sun-God driving the sun out of the east. CHIMNEY-PIECE IN DOWNHAYNE BEDROOM (below) of golden yellow and white marble showing oak branches and acorns.

was discovered by chance when someone leaning against one of them, found to her consternation that it moved and feared that some great damage had been done. It was then realized that the beam above was not upheld by the pillars.

The perfect simplicity of the plain tinted walls contrasting with the elegance of the dark Spanish mahogany doors, accentuate the delicate decoration of cornice, frieze and ceiling, but it is the marble mantelpiece which is the outstanding feature of the room. Pillars of mottled Seaheary marble introduce a soft reddish note into the room, while inset oval panels of Cotham marble give a striking note. The Cotham marble can be called local ; the only known streak of it lies between Bristol and Uplyme. It is pure black and white, the veining of which closely resembles pictures etched with black Indian ink on a white ground ; the picture in each panel is different. The oval frames of the pictures are wreaths of white marble flowers. The central slab, in the manner of Adam, is of very fine statuary, depicting a shepherd lad lying under a tree while sheep nibble and hogs burrow beside him—a picturesque sylvan scene. From the windows the Dorset-Devon border can be seen on the neighbouring hill, and in view of the local marble and the fact that Dorset rams are depicted, intimate local knowledge must be attributed to the designer.

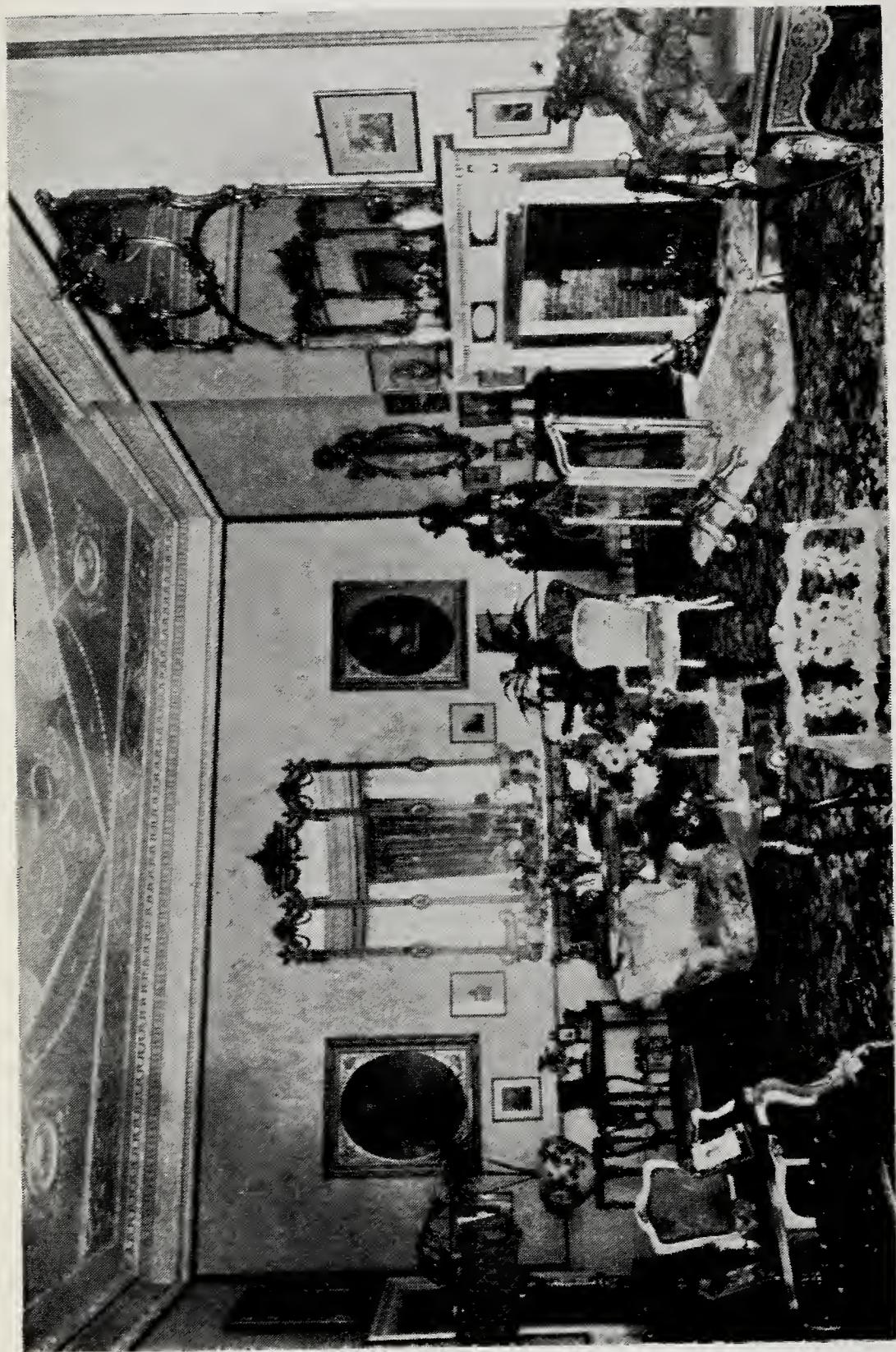
The original receipt shows that the two exquisitely lovely mantel-pieces, the one in the dining-room and the one in the drawing-room, together with the marble, cost £190.

The plaster-work on the ceilings, almost unique, is more domestic, and less formal than on most of the ceilings of the period. Since no provision had been made in the centre of the ceiling for the hanging of

lamps or lights of any kind, much more scope was possible in the designs. The centre piece in the Dining-room, in very low relief, shows a simple country scene, a thatched cottage, with a woman at the door scattering corn to the chickens, horses drinking at a farmyard pond edged with rushes. Ricks are being built ; ladders, a rake-harrow and other farm implements can be seen. The gables of the cottage and the ridges of stacks have been cunningly contrived to make them stand out in perspective. Some people consider this to be the picture of one of the farms, Higher Hampton, and it certainly resembles it, but the Kentish impression is strong, for hops are seen growing on tall stakes on the farm ; moreover the round Kentish hayricks would not be found on a Devon farm. Panels on the four sides of the centre piece are more formal, and indeed more ordinary, merely four simple little aspects of the seasons. The part of the ceiling behind the pillars (see picture, page 000), not at all obvious, over the place where the side-board used to stand, shows the head of a wicked little grinning Bacchus, wreathed in vine leaves. Placed as it is, remarkably few visitors would even glance up at him, yet the workmanship is just as perfect as that in full view of the room, reminding one of Longfellow's simple lines :

“ In the elder days of Art
Builders wrought with greatest care
Each minute and unseen part,
For the Gods see everywhere.”

In view of the decorative ceilings, doors and pillars, little further adornment seems to be needed, but when the de la Pole family lived in the house, the walls were completely covered with large pictures, dozens of immense family portraits and huge animal



THE DRAWING-ROOM OF THE LATE VICTORIAN ERA, crowded with occasional tables, small photographs and little vases of flowers. A variety of gilt and satin chairs can be seen, also the fashionable aspidistra, and a standard lamp with flounces. The ornamental gilt mirrors resemble those in the Victorian Dining-room.

paintings ; one of the white horses by Sartorius, hanging on the walls, was actually life-size.

The famous "Lady Anne de La Pole" by Romney, hung in the Dining-room at one time, between the fireplace and the pillars, but at a recent date after this exquisite picture had been sold, a copy hung in the Drawing-room in a position near the window, affording much better lighting conditions (facing page 176). In later years, the Dining-room and Drawing-room have been transposed, a door now giving much easier access to the kitchens.

The Drawing-room on the south-east occupies the position corresponding to that of the Dining-room on the south-west, and resembles it in general, except that there are no pillars to extend the length.

Here, too, the proportions of the room, the lofty ceiling and cornice, frieze and mantelpiece are just exquisite.

The same style has been carried out in the chimney-piece (facing page 165) ; the central marble slab in the eastern wall depicts Phaeton, son of Phoebus the Sun-god, driving his father's chariot out of the east. The five horses which he drives are in clear perspective and show amazing vigour and pace.

In the ceiling the central panel shows Minerva the goddess of wisdom with various symbols of learning, the owl, the book, globes, and the cock. In the corners are medallions of the seasonal deities. The most notable section, the semi-circle of the bay, is occupied by a display of the signs of the Zodiac, with the clear definite little figures surrounding again a reproduction of the Pole Arms.

This ceiling has a ground of pale wedgewood blue, but that of the other rooms is white.

These ceilings are certainly quite exceptionally fine and distinctive, showing originality and skill in the

conception and in workmanship ; the execution is alleged to have been carried out by Italian workmen.

On the same floor on the north side, are a charming ladies' Boudoir to the east, and the library to the west.

The Library has a fireplace in dull-coloured marble, of the William and Mary period, that was brought from a house which was being pulled down ; it is said that in order to bring the mantelpiece up-to-date (as one might put new sleeves in an old gown) a mottled golden slab was added, decorated with white festoons and other "Adam" ornament. On the other hand, the dark mottled marble may merely indicate that this was a man's smoking-room or snuggery.

A vast Sheraton book-case, 11-ft. wide and 10 ft. high, an elegant example of the master's work, was specially designed for this room. The small panels on the glass-front are delicately divided, the elegance and beauty being due to a few fine inlaid lines ; "swan's neck" design on the top, and the handsome camouflaged cupboards and brass handles are characteristic. The book-case has now been moved to the old Dining-room where it occupies the greater part of the east wall, and looks as if it had been there from time immemorial. Many of the family books were sold in 1926, but the most valuable ones are now in the fire-proof Muniment Room at Antony.

The bedrooms are all very large, those on the south having the benefit of the great circular bay which extends the whole height of the house. Dressing-rooms adjoin all the important bedrooms.

The only bedroom with a decorated ceiling is Downhayne over the Dining-room which has dainty-coloured panels round a delicate wreath of flowers of the four seasons.

The apartments of the family are compactly arranged, round a central well-lighted square on each

landing ; all the bedroom doors open from this square, in an unusually convenient and space-saving manner.

Actually, apart from the position of the original kitchen (which for culinary reasons, may have been placed as far as possible from the Dining-room), the design is as neat and workmanlike as that of the most modern labour-saving domicile.

An attractive and friendly feature of each bedroom is its name painted in gilt and colour over the door. Every room is named after a farm on the estate, such as Downhayne, Colcombe, Lillylake, Holyford, Hampton and Yarbury, etc. Often, in riding over the surrounding country, one can stop at a farm, to find that it has the familiar name of a well-known bedroom.

The adjoining dressing-rooms of most of the bedrooms were large enough in later years to be used as good-sized bedrooms. It cannot be determined if the one bathroom, with its copper bath, was part of the original plan, but if not it must have been added early in the nineteenth century.

Originally the new house had a chapel in the west wing ; but this was later altered to make the Billiard Room.

Round the roof, enclosed by a parapet about 3-ft. high, runs a wide path, a fascinating viewpoint whence the whole countryside can be enjoyed. Until recently, the prints of many a foot outlined in the soft lead could be deciphered with the initials of a bygone generation scratched in them. J.W. 1839 was the first date, another was dated 1856. It seemed a far cry from those peaceful days to the cruelly cold nights of 1940 and 1941 when watchers on the roof scanned the skies for planes and the coast for the lights of invaders. But anyhow, the lead has all gone now, replaced in these less opulent days by macadam.

CHAPTER XI

THE SANDS RUN OUT

Now that the history of the earlier Poles, the new house and its builder have been recorded, it must be said that the Poles and de la Poles (for the name has varied from generation to generation) settled down to be country squires and to live through the long Victorian years and into the twentieth century in that happy state which leaves behind it only pleasant stories, but little history. May it be assumed that the "curse" was gradually beginning to take effect in wiping out the family?

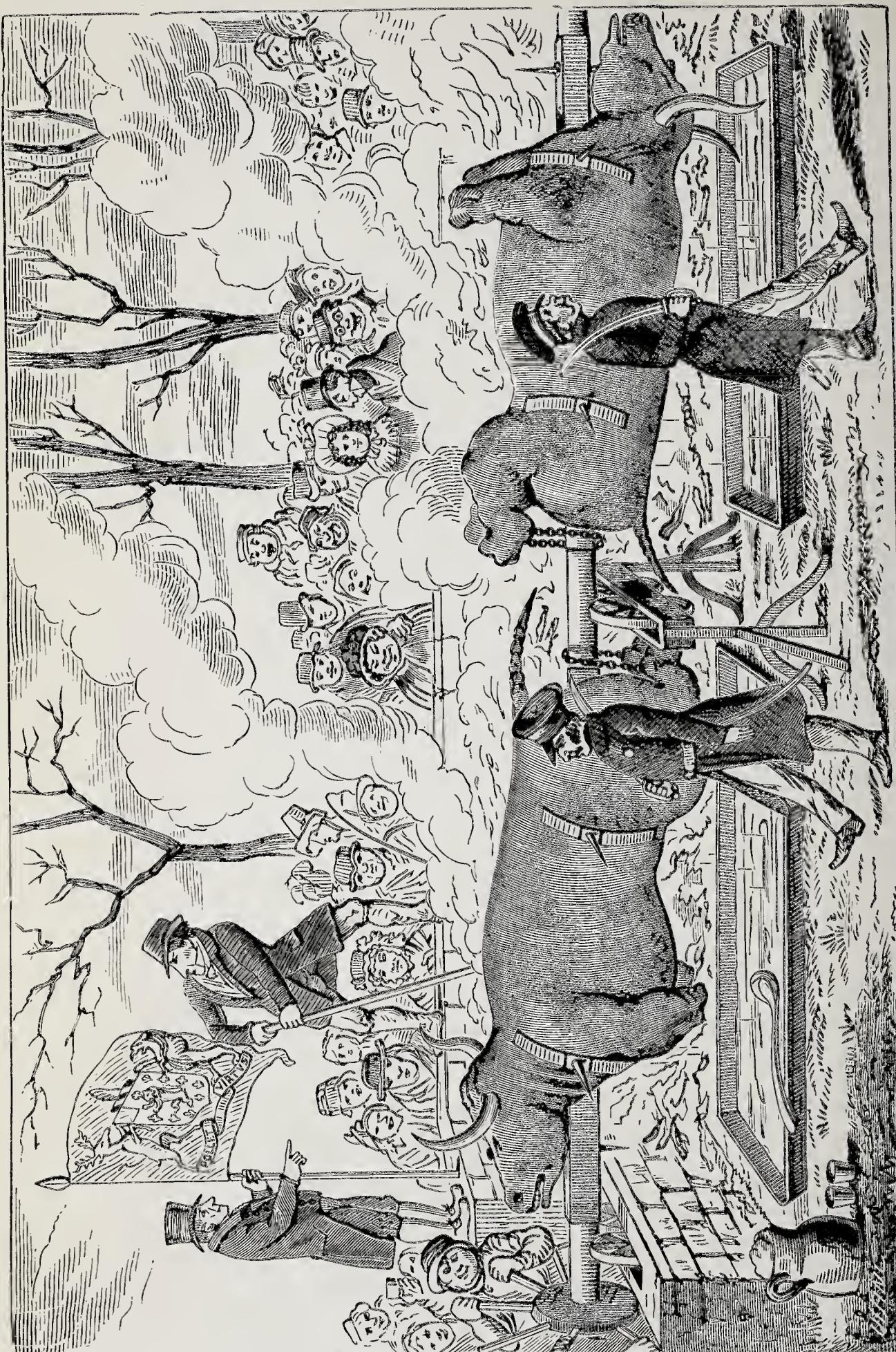
"His eldest son shall never to heir
Nay, never his eldest born."

It is almost uncanny how steadily and relentlessly the members of the family have passed on, and how the title has gone to a second son or to a younger brother, until in 1926 the last of the family died, unmarried at the age of seventy-six. The curse, therefore, is now worked out, and the whole property has passed to Sir John Carew Pole.

The last notable event of later times was the celebration of the Coming of Age of Sir John George Reeve, grandson of the Builder, in January, 1829, when his father, renowned for his open-hearted genial hospitality, seems to have excelled himself. A long account of these festivities is given in Pulman's *Book of the Axe*, culled mainly from a local paper, *Trewman's Flying Post*.

It is stated that 20,000 people were regaled during the three days and nights of the feast; it says much

COMING OF AGE OF THE HEIR 1829. The picture of the roasting of the two oxen was drawn by George Cruikshank. The enormous spit and the wheel by which it was turned still hang in the kitchen of the Mancr House.



for the invitation that it could draw such a vast concourse from the sparsely-populated countryside in those days when means of transport were few, and costly. Two fat oxen of 50 score each were roasted whole in the open air on the Shute side of Oxen Hill ; the spit which was used was 25-ft. long, and hangs to this day in the Old Manor House to prove the story true. It took nearly three days and nights to roast the animals, the great fires making genial warmth for the great company, during the frosty winter days and nights. On the eventful birthday, at one o'clock, the meat was cut up and distributed to the assembled crowd.

Pulman elaborates the story : “ It was almost a revival of mediaeval festivity.”

Among the victuals offered, in addition to the vast quantities of beef, were a thousand wheaten cakes ; this was all “ washed down with six hogsheads of strong October and six of the delicious cider for which the neighbourhood is celebrated.”

Everything was in keeping. Shute House with its overflowing larders was thrown open for days. The poor were regaled to their hearts’ (or rather, their stomachs’) content. The number of guests was probably over-estimated, for a brief calculation shows that 1,000 wheaten cakes and 12 hogsheads of beer and cider (at $52\frac{1}{2}$ imperial gallons to the hogshead) would not be over-lavish for 20,000 persons.

All kinds of entertainment were offered, with various sports and games such as a race after a greased-tail pig. “ Sir William and his son arrived upon the hill attended by a long procession of tenantry, trades-people, bands and numerous equipages. “ Almost the first act of the generous-hearted baronet was to hold up a splendid goblet, and to address the enthusiastic multitude :

‘ I hold in my hand my Family Cup. I drink to the health of our Lord the King, and may God bless you all, my good friends . . . your children and your children’s children to the latest generation.’ ”

Alas, and alas for the high hopes of the good sire, John George left no son. For 100 years no child’s voice echoed in the great rooms, and no children’s feet pattered about the corridors. All Sir William’s children were born in Marylebone.

John George spent much of his life in France, though he is known to have signed the minutes of the Feoffees in Colyton in 1870. He married a French woman who survived him, and it was she who left his portrait to the French State Department.

The remaining members of the family left little mark in history or on the estates, but they all proudly and faithfully kept up the house and the Park. A few stories survive :

Sir John George was succeeded as 9th baronet by his half-brother, Sir William Edmund, who was born one year after Waterloo. Of the surviving children of the latter, several had died young, as may be seen by the lovely monument in the Pole Chapel in Shute Church. Several lived at home or in Colyton. One of them, Miss Edrica Blanche de la Pole lived to be a very old lady ; when a Pageant of the history of Shute was presented by the girls of Shute School in 1939, Miss Blanche took the part of her own great-grandmother, Lady Anne de la Pole, and although Miss Blanche was well over eighty years of age at the time, she *pretended* to be her own old ancestress, who was in fact only seventy-one years of age at the time of the great Coming of Age.

Miss Blanche and her father were devoted to each other, and she spoke of him almost with reverence. One big adventure which they carried out together

with their own hands was the planting of rhododendrons on Shute Hill. "With our own hands," she would reiterate, "with our own hands." The bushes have now spread luxuriantly and reverted to type, so much so that in Spring, a great stretch of pale mauve colour right along the upper slopes of the hill can be seen from a distance all round.

Another story told by Miss Blanche was that her mother as a young woman used to enjoy a trip to London ; she and her husband used to go by coach, in the days before the coming of the railway. She liked to sit outside, although it was not considered very proper for a lady. It was often bitterly cold. She therefore had made a thick heavy driving coat with capes ; it had also a hem some 16 inches deep divided into pockets into which she could tuck her feet to keep them warm.

The South-Western railway had not then come as far west as Axminster. At that time surveyors were prospecting to plan the lines on the southern part of the Shute estate. Indignant at the prospect of having trains passing in front of his windows, the Baronet refused permission to the surveyors to enter on his premises, and had them hounded out of the park. Eventually he allowed the railway company a narrow strip of land in which the traffic could be concealed right at the bottom of the hill. The result was that the lines and Seaton Junction station were laid in a cutting, completely hidden from view from the house. A hundred years later, inhabitants of Shute bewail that the fastest trains do not stop at the Junction, the reason being that the incline is too steep, owing to the depth of the cutting. The railway also by-passed Colyton, formerly an important "Hundred" ; so Axminster has gained.

At any rate Sir William Edmund was successful in

preserving the amenities. It is interesting to note that to this day, permission cannot be obtained to erect any building on the estate within sight of the windows of the house.

SIR EDMUND, THE TENTH BARONET.

Having lived most of his life in Brighton, Sir Edmund succeeded to the title and estates late in life.

He and his wife, though having no children of their own, were passionately fond of young people, so as soon as they came to Shute they made plans to render the house as attractive as possible to their youthful friends. They were too reverent to make any external alterations to the complete and perfect structure, but they used a great deal of ingenuity in transforming parts of the interior. A new kitchen was formed from some workshops, in a position more convenient for cooking and serving ; up to that time the meals brought from the kitchen had been taken across the courtyard, through six doors, up a stair and across the front hall to the Dining-room.

Sir Edmund's lady took over the vast kitchen, and in a clever and ingenious manner transformed it into a perfectly enchanting bijou theatre, complete with many and varied drop-scenes and an attractive proscenium (see picture opposite page 174). The decorations were skilfully designed and painted by an artist from Norwich. A tiny, but realistic, orchestra well, oil-lamps as foot-lights, side-lights and many clever gadgets testify to the imagination of the designer. He was fortunate in finding the most professional tip-up seats in brown velvet, at a sale in Brighton.

Next, the Ballroom on the west was contrived by taking down partition walls between two servants' flats ; this formed a narrow room some 50-ft. long ; stained-glass windows adorned the side facing the



VICTORIAN THEATRE, showing foot-lights, the miniature orchestra well, tip-up velvet seats, and one of the many artistic drop-scenes. This theatre was formed from the enormous stone-flagged kitchen.

house. From this long room, they introduced a staircase down to the former Chapel which they transformed into a handsome Billiard Room. Gun rooms and stables were of course already in existence. Finally, Sir Edmund, who had some skill as an artist, took down part of the wall between the two rooms over the theatre, and constructed a fine well-lighted Studio, where he painted, and hung in magnificent heavy gilt frames, the works of his hands.

All this was done fairly rapidly, and little parties of young folks began to be invited. It then became obvious that the single bathroom, which was then in Lillylake East, was not sufficient, or indeed suitable, for many visitors. Formerly the ladies who occupied bedrooms on the top floor had been shocked at being obliged to descend to the bathroom by the public staircase, so one of the earlier baronets had had a small newel staircase introduced into a narrow turret beside the bathroom; thus lady visitors could slip down stealthily and in privacy. It might have been simpler to make another bathroom. However, later on Sir Edmund had a square turret built on the west elevation with a series of bathrooms and lavatories one above the other on each floor, so the modest ladies could go to the bathrooms without embarrassment.

There were many little parties, and to this day elderly folks in the neighbourhood and further afield can attest to the pleasant entertainments they enjoyed there. The house-parties usually seem to have followed a given pattern: the guests arrived by train in the afternoon, and were met by a wagonette at Seaton Junction. In the evening there was a dance in the Ballroom. Next day there were little parties and a choice of shooting, hunting or fishing while some of the visitors spent their time preparing for

the charades of the evening. These charades, very popular at that period, requiring little time for preparation, were often most elaborate. The beautiful scenery of the Theatre was used and an amazing selection of costumes was disinterred from the vast stores of finery from earlier generations of the family.

The last descendant of the builder of the new house, Sir Frederick de la Pole, a gentle, unassuming old bachelor, left only kindly memories behind him after his thirteen years in the house. He loved his vast collection of books, and spent most of his time reading. It is said that the lonely old man disliked being interrupted and stood in awe of his servants, so that on some doors he had bolts on the inside to keep out intruders. He was an expert photographer and left behind him many photographs he had taken of the oil paintings which covered every wall in the building.

LADY BEATRICE POLE-CAREW.

Although she is not strictly a Pole, no description of Shute House would be complete without a few words regarding the deep impress which she left on it.

At his death, Sir Frederick, the eleventh and last Baronet, left the estate by will to a very distant connection, Sir John Carew Pole, who was descended from Carolus, younger brother of the fourth Baronet. His father, General Sir Reginald Pole-Carew, well-known during the Boer War as "Polly of the Guards," was the popular hero to hundreds of young people particularly those who wore a button with a picture of this gentleman. During the war he married the exquisitely lovely Irish beauty, Lady Beatrice Butler, daughter of the Marquis of Ormonde; even at a time before photography had come into its own, and before Society papers were numerous, portraits



TWENTIETH-CENTURY DRAWING-ROOM, as Lady Beatrice left it. This room, looking south, could hardly be recognised were it not for the mantel-piece. Romney's Lady Anne is seen to much better advantage near the window; another of her many other portraits hangs over the fireplace.

of the handsome pair were to be seen in the windows of the famous London photographers, and on picture post-cards. Many a schoolgirl, including the writer of the present story, had pinned inside the lid of her desk a post-card of this lovely lady.

The heavy burden of Death Duties compelled Sir John to sell much of the property, and to let the house. As he was then a very young man, it fell to the lot of Lady Beatrice to modernize it and make it fit for a discriminating tenant, a task to which she brought consummate taste and skill. She spent more than a year supervising renovations and decorations. She renewed grates, installed central heating and electricity, made dressing-rooms into bathrooms, and indeed brought the whole place up to first-class modern conditions. She used to relate how in some rooms twelve or more layers of dark Victorian wallpaper had to be stripped off before the distemper could be applied. From this statement it would appear that the original walls had been plain and not decorated with paintings or plaster festoons, as in some eighteenth century houses. The delicate colours she introduced accorded well with the Adam style. Photographs (see page 000) give a striking comparison of the Dining-room and Drawing-room at various epochs. The favourite sitting-room of Lady Beatrice was the small Boudoir near the front door, now known as the Chinese Room, on account of the delicately coloured mural panels. These panels are colourful and attractive, and have all the appearance of ancient parchments, but when this was mentioned to Lady Beatrice, she replied quickly, "Oh no, I bought them at Liberty's."

She loved a wide expanse, so, although all the bedrooms in the house were at her disposal, she chose for herself a large South room on the top floor,

commanding the whole countryside down to the sea and round to the Dorset hills and the high lands of Central Devon.

As another result of her love of a vista, a large number of trees in the grounds were cut down so that an avenue opened right up to Shute Hill, where in spring rhododendrons and feathery larches make colourful splashes. Alas, in the last few years, the luxuriant growth of copse and sapling have completely obscured the hill.

The younger generation can never be sufficiently grateful to the energy and vision of the wise, yet modest, lady in bringing the eighteenth century interior up to the standards of the twentieth, preserving the charm and adding new freshness.

Thus the family of the de la Poles of Shute has passed away. No sons of the builder survive.

So in the inscrutable ways of fate, the curse has worked itself out.

“ His eldest son shall never be heir,
Nay, never his eldest born.”



THE FORMER DINING-ROOM, present day.

CHAPTER XII

EPILOGUE AND SUITE

Shute House soon entered upon a new avocation, when the empty halls began to fill with the "gallant and high-hearted happiness of youth."

Year by year, girls have come, lived and worked and loved, and have departed. One likes to think that they have been appreciative, even perhaps unwittingly (as is the way with young people), of the beauty and dignity of their habitations, and that they have almost unknowingly absorbed the historic atmosphere of the centuries long past.

May the coming years hold in store for this goodly heritage and all the dwellers therein a golden future.

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